

HUDDLE UP: MEET THE INDY STEELERS

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Have you ever driven by Tarkington Park on a warm summer night and wondered about all those kids playing football? Meet the Indy Steelers, Butler Tarkington's shining star among recent neighborhood tragedies.

This photo contains just a few of the kids. Today, more than 80 players from ages 7 to 14 are part of this youth football program, as well as a dedicated group of cheerleaders. You may have never heard of them, but they are famous in the youth football world. Most recently the 14 and under (14u) team took 2nd place in a national tournament held in St. Louis last November. All of the other teams (12u, 10u and 9u) also brought home second place in their respective levels at the State Tournament. They practice ten months out of the year, with their spring season starting soon. The first game is Saturday, March 12th at 9:00 a.m. at Ben Davis High School.

With the upgrades at Tarkington Park taking up much of their practice space, the players have had the opportunity to use the practice fields at both Butler University and the Indianapolis Colts Complex.

The Indy Steelers have overcome their own tragedies the last couple of years. They lost 10-year-old teammate, Deshaun Swanson, when he was murdered during a drive-by shooting in the 4000 block of Graceland Avenue. His older brother, Dai'twan Swanson, is still a member of the team, and was honored with the Heart Award at their recent banquet. The award will be given out annually to the player who overcomes challenges off the football field.

This isn't the first tragedy this team has faced. In 2014, teammate, Ty-juan Preer, was shot in a drive-by shooting at a gas station. The team is surrounding him in this photograph. He's currently confined to a wheel chair, but making progress every day.

The success at the state and national level has caused the program to grow quickly. The team has grown from 25 players ten



years ago, when they started as part of the league at Tabernacle Presbyterian Church, to more than 80 players today. This growth means the coaches and dads can no longer support it financially on their own. Selling candy bars is no longer enough.

Despite the financial strain, these dads are dedicated. Most of them played one sport or another at the college level, and Coach Jefferson played with the Indianapolis Colts. They all hope to

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR: BTNA GREAT INDY CLEANUP ON APRIL 16TH



In partnership with Keep Indianapolis Beautiful (KIB), BTNA will again host a spring neighborhood clean up day on Saturday, April 16.

KIB's Great Indy Cleanup is an anti-litter program in partnership with the City of Indianapolis designed to assist individuals and community groups combat heavy litter and debris that has accumulated in public spaces such as streets, alleys, greenspaces and waterways. Through coordinated community cleanups residents can make a visible difference in their neighborhood, and get to know neighbors that wish to make a difference too.

Please look for updates on the BTNA website and how you can participate. Contact us at btboard@gmail.com if you would like to participate in the event. More information on KIB's Great Indy Cleanup program can be found at www.greatindycleanup.com.