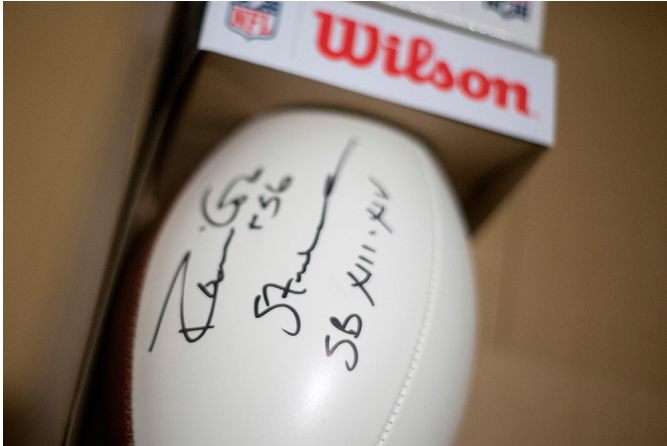


Former Pittsburgh Steeler shares positive message about education

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
Friday, 22 February 2019 10:24



Gallup Rotary hosts Scholarship Fundraiser

The Rotary Club of Gallup held its 29th Annual Scholarship Fundraiser Banquet at Red Rock Park Feb. 7. Proceeds from the event went to the Gallup Rotary Club Regional High School Scholarship Fund. This year's guest speaker was former Pittsburgh Steelers' linebacker and defensive end, Robin Cole.

Cole attended the University of New Mexico where he became an All-American. He was the first person to be a first-round draft pick by the Pittsburgh Steelers and to be a part of the infamous "Steel Curtain" defense. He played linebacker and defensive end for 12 seasons for the Steelers and played in two Super Bowls – Super Bowl XIII and Super Bowl XIV.

Currently, Cole speaks at schools and churches, and has been a keynote speaker and emcee for numerous events. The *Gallup Sun* was privileged to sit down with Cole and learn more about this remarkable man.

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Sun: Thank you for taking the time out to do this and it's a pleasure meeting you.

Cole: You're welcome and it's nice to meet you as well. So, you want to know how I got into this, right? (laughing). How I got started in this?

Sun: Yes, how did you get started, and what influenced you to get into football?

Cole: I started out playing flag football while I was in junior high in the ninth grade. I was also a baseball player, too, and I considered myself a better baseball player (laughing). It's probably because I hadn't played tackle football then. I then started playing more tackle football in my later high school years. My goal the whole time was to get a scholarship to go to college. That's why I played football.

Sun: Now to play sports or professional football, or to go to college?

Cole: Just to go to college. I wanted to major in criminology, but guess what I found out after I reported to camp? UNM didn't have a criminology major (laughing). I then got into physical education, which was my second major. Then in my junior year I found out that I was interested in business after taking some business classes. In fact, after I ended my NFL career, I went back to college and took more business classes and got my bachelor's degree in business.

Sun: That's awesome. So, education is a big part of your life then?

Cole: Oh, you better believe it, you better believe it. Less than 1 percent of athletes go to college and get a chance to play professional football. And a lot of them do go to school thinking that's what they are going to do. I have three children with master's degrees and one with a PhD. It's very important to me. Education is important to me.

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Sun: How was (the value) of education introduced to you?

Cole: I learned it as a young man. Without an education where are you going? I'm a part of family of 10 children and I'm number seven. I watch my oldest ones take jobs – pretty good jobs that paid them retirement. But education takes you a little further.

Sun: Now enlighten us on how it was to play for the Pittsburgh Steelers?

Cole: I went from the University of New Mexico, never in a championship game, to my second year in a national football league, to the Superbowl. The ultimate football, fantastic, some of the best men that I have ever been associated with that played with the Steelers. Terry Bradshaw, Franco Harris, Lynn Swann, the list goes on — not only great football players but great people. They've done things for people.

Sun: Wow, that says it all Robin. I'd like to ask you what other things along the lines of education have you done personally for communities?

Cole: I used to speak, and I don't do it as much as I used to. I used to speak over a hundred times a year, high schools, middle, and even elementary. I gave them positive messages, about respect, responsibility, and we even got into the bullying thing. Then I started going to the prisons and talking to them, the same causes, the same information. I started doing it since I was a kid about the age of 24, and I still do it, but not as much.

Sun: What other causes are close to you?

Cole: I run a foundation for prostate cancer, I'm a cancer survivor. I have two brothers that have passed away because of it. My dad passed away from it as well That's my cause. Youth, helping adults-helping them to understand what life all is about.

Sun: Does your faith play a role in this?

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Cole: Oh, you better believe it, very strong, God is important to me. I was lucky and fortunate to grow up in a family that believed in God and going to church was important. I was quite young when I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for my faith.

Visit: www.galluprotaryclub.org

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