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Young basketball players make veterans wish come true

Excellent! Rating: ★★★★★ 2.93 / 5 (73 votes)

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Posted: 2011 Apr 01 - 01:03

- For Hometown News FORT PIERCE - Norval Nelson, 92, is a veteran of the June 6, 1944 landing on at Omaha Beach in Normandy. He was a member of the Navy combat demolition units and trained in Fort Pierce in 1943 prior to going to Normandy. He has always dreamed of visiting the National Navy SEAL Museum in Fort Pierce, and now, thanks to the young...

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He has always dreamed of visiting the National Navy SEAL Museum in Fort Pierce, and now, thanks to the young boys and girls basketball players at Westminster Christian School in Elgin, Ill., Mr. Nelson's final wish has come true through the Free Throws For Heroes charity program.

On April 4, Mr. Nelson and his 82-year old friend, Michael Natale, a World War II veteran, will board a plane in Chicago and travel to the National Navy SEAL Museum for a heroes welcome on April 5.

It was in Fort Pierce where Mr. Nelson trained and boarded a boat for England and then to Omaha Beach as one of the first units in battle.

Mr. Nelson was wounded five times during the battle helping to clear mines and obstacles for the landing crafts and troops, but the one thing that always hurt him was not being able to visit the museum to honor and pay his respects to his fellow teammates and Navy SEALs.

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Now, 67 years later, the dream will become reality because of a simple free throw contest and about 60 basketball players.

Originated by Illinois-based nonprofit organization, The Charity Stripe, Free Throws For Heroes encourages young basketball players to step up to the line and make free throws that make a difference to America's military troops and their families.

Each player shoots 50 free throws at his or her practice. They receive a pledge from family and friends for every free throw that is made. Participating schools and teams receive an official event kit that enables players to participate in the fundraiser. More than 85 percent of the money is collected is donated to charitable recipients like Mr. Nelson.

"I just can't find the appropriate words to express my true feelings and appreciation for what Free Throws For Heroes and these young players have done for me," said Mr. Nelson.

"I'm probably 75 years older than these players and to know that they care enough about me to do what they've done to make this dream come true for me, I just don't know what I can ever do to thank them. I'm just so blessed," he said.

The Charity Stripe, a nonprofit organization, is an initiative exclusively dedicated to making free throws that make a difference for American families in need. Whether experiencing financial hardship due to military service, debilitating illness, natural disaster and/or other philanthropic condition, needy Americans can count on The Charity Stripe's many free throw initiatives and participating basketball teams, players coaches and fans to step up to the line and take the important shot to help in their time of need.

For more information, e-mail Rolf.Snyder@gmail.com or TheCharityStripe@gmail.com.

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