



USA Football, New York Football Giants and NRG Recognize “Guardians of the Gridiron” Winner

December 20, 2013

-- Plainedge Bobcats Youth Football Club Receives \$5,000 Grant for New Equipment --

NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Dec. 20, 2013-- As the football season comes to a close, [NRG Energy](#) (NYSE: NRG), in conjunction with USA Football's [Heads Up Football](#) program and the New York Football Giants, announced the [Plainedge Bobcats Youth Football Club](#) winners of the “NRG Guardian of the Gridiron” inaugural award program. The program recognizes Heads Up Football clubs in the Tri-State area that exhibit the power to provide a better, safer game for youth football players in their community.



PHOTO:(From left) USA Football's Dan Gant, Plainedge player Joseph Betz, NRG's Jim Steffes, Plainedge President Jerry Betz, Plainedge Coach Tom Licata and Plainedge Player Marcelo Licata. (Photo: Business Wire)

equipment to local clubs in need.

“Safety is an important factor of the game that we instill in our coaches and players, and because of the NRG Guardians of the Gridiron program, we can continue to focus on it into the coming seasons,” said Jerry Betz, President, Plainedge Bobcats. “I speak for the whole organization when I say how excited we were to be recognized on the field of MetLife Stadium as this is a once in a lifetime opportunity.”

The Plainedge Bobcats service the Long Island communities of Plainedge, Bethpage, North Massapequa, Farmingdale and Seaford.

Program Promotes Safety and Community Efforts

The NRG Guardians of the Gridiron program asked teams within the Tri-State area to apply and submit a video that showcased how they make the game of football safer. The award ceremony was the culmination of a season-long competition. Five nominees were announced each month at New York Giants home football games, which then competed for two weeks within the month to promote their nomination via Facebook and Twitter and obtain the most online votes.

The monthly winners each received a \$1,000 football equipment donation and became finalists for the NRG Guardians of the Gridiron Award. The finalists submitted a video and/or essay stating their case as to why they should be selected for the grand-prize award of \$5,000. All NRG Guardians of the Gridiron grant winners' videos highlight how the clubs have taught Heads Up Tackling; feature interviews with players and coaches discussing how Heads Up Football has impacted their program; feature interviews with parents discussing how Heads Up Football has eased concerns over the safety of their children; and showcase how they support their hometowns through community service.

The following finalists' videos were voted on the most to receive the grants:

- [Bethpage P.A.L. Youth Football Club](#), Bethpage, NY – September finalist
- [Shrub Oak Youth Football Club](#) – Shrub Oak, NY – October finalist

Selected for their video that garnered more than 28,000 votes and demonstrated best the work they do within their community to make football a safer game, the team was honored on the field during New York Giants' Dec. 15 home game with a \$5,000 check from NRG's Jim Steffes, President, NRG Retail Northeast. In addition to ensuring safety for their players, they stressed community involvement including holding a fundraiser for a local 15-year-old boy with leukemia and a food drive to benefit less-fortunate families.

“The Plainedge players, coaches and parents have shown the true spirit of why we initiated the NRG Guardians of the Gridiron Award, and we are very excited to be a part of their efforts to make football a little bit safer for local youth,” said Steffes. “While all the finalists deserve the award for their outstanding work, the Plainedge Bobcats stood out from the rest of the submissions with a large number of public votes and good work the club has done this season.”

The team said they would use the \$5,000 grant to purchase new helmets and shoulder pads and plan to donate their old

- [West Hempstead Youth Football Club](#) – West Hempstead, NY – November finalist
- [Plainedge Bobcats Youth Football Club](#) – Plainedge, NY – December finalist; grand prize winner

Finalists were determined by the community outreach of each team, how many children are part of the clubs, special programs the clubs host that make a difference, and public voting on videos. Time and effort put into the videos as part of the teams' applications and how the team marketed the video on social media also played a part in the judging.

About USA Football

Endowed by the NFL and NFLPA in 2002, USA Football is the official youth football development partner of the NFL, its 32 teams and the NFL Players Association and manages U.S. national teams for international competition. USA Football is an independent 501-c-3 non-profit organization that leads the development of the game through educational programs and innovative resources. USA Football also annually awards \$1 million in equipment grants and subsidizes league volunteer background checks.

About Heads Up Football

Heads Up Football is a national initiative created by USA Football and supported by the NFL, Pac-12, Big-12, Big Ten and ACC conferences, along with numerous other stakeholders in the sport. Heads Up Football was built to create a better and safer game. Currently, more than 580,000 players and 83,000 coaches are a part of the program. For more information on Heads Up Football, please visit: <http://usafootball.com/headsup/>

About NRG

NRG is leading a customer-driven change in the U.S. energy industry by delivering cleaner and smarter energy choices, building on the strength of the nation's largest and most diverse competitive power portfolio. A Fortune 500 company, we create value through reliable and efficient conventional generation while driving innovation in solar and renewable power, electric vehicle ecosystems, carbon capture technology and customer-centric energy solutions. Our retail electricity providers – Reliant, Green Mountain Energy, Energy Plus and NRG Residential Solutions – serve more than two million residential and commercial customers throughout the country. More information is available at www.nrgenergy.com. Connect with NRG Energy on Facebook and follow us on Twitter [@nrgenergy](#).

Photos/Multimedia Gallery Available: <http://www.businesswire.com/multimedia/home/20131220005909/en/>

Source: NRG

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