



Raiders Attend Holiday Heroes

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FB Marcel Reece and safety Matt Giordano attended Holiday Heroes, sponsored by the Wender Weis Foundation for Children (WWFC), at AT&T Park in San Francisco.



FB Marcel Reece poses for photos and signs autographs for the kids. Photo by Tony Gonzales

FB Marcel Reece and safety **Matt Giordano** attended Holiday Heroes, sponsored by the Wender Weis Foundation for Children (WWFC), at AT&T Park in San Francisco. The WWFC sponsored over 200 at-risk youth to attend the event, while also raising money for various organizations around the Bay Area. The two Raiders veterans spent time visiting with the guests, signing autographs, posing for photos, and interacting with the kids.

“Our foundation has been around since 1994 and we basically raise money for underserved children in the Bay Area,” explained Amy Wender-Hoch, Founder and president of WWFC. “We’ve been producing this event called Holiday Heroes. We originally were Halloween Heroes and now we’re Holiday Heroes and we just basically have a fun, family-filled evening for adults and kids. We do a lot of really fun activities at the ballpark.”

The attendance of the Raiders and athletes from the other Bay Area professional teams is the key to the success of Holiday Heroes. “That’s the crux and the key to our whole event is having athletes from the different teams come out here and get to

interact with the kids, especially the underserved kids that end up being a part of the event,” said Wender-Hoch. “The athletes are their heroes and them getting to interact with them just means so much to them.”

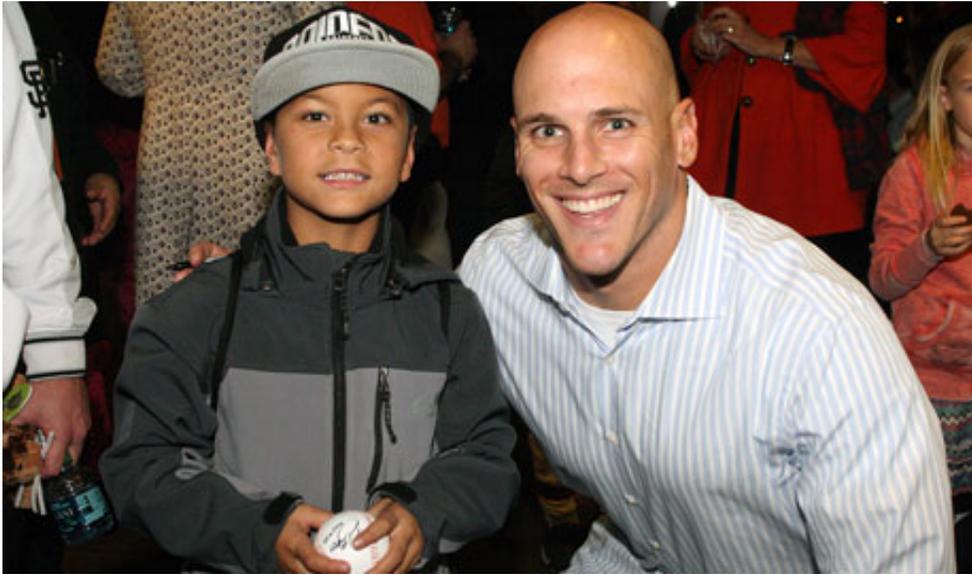


Reece and Giordano pose for a photo with SF Giants pitcher Jeremy Affeldt. *Photo by Tony Gonzales*

Reece and Giordano enjoyed their time at the event. “For one, it’s a great event, great setup,” said Reece. “They have a lot of fun things to do. We’re here in San Francisco at AT&T Park and everyone is having a great time. There’s some great ballpark food and it’s just a great for people to come out and experience something that they sometimes don’t get to experience. It’s fun to come out here and play my part in it.”

Many of the kids and their families had the opportunity to meet the players. “Marcel was incredibly gracious,” said Claire Pollioni, who brought her family to Holiday Heroes to meet the athletes, enjoy the event, and also give back to the local charities. “He signed autographs for all the children who asked him. He gave a pin to our friend’s son. He was just personable, warm and friendly. Very, very gracious.”

Pollioni appreciated the underlying message having the athletes at the event gave to her kids. “I think it teaches the kids that the athletes are people also,” said Pollioni. “They’re not just somebody they see on TV playing sports; they actually care about kids and families and signing autographs and saying hello to the kids. It teaches the kids that there’s more to being an athlete than just playing the sport.”



Giordano poses for a photo with a young Raiders fan at Holiday Heroes. Photo by Tony Gonzales

Giordano was happy to give his time, especially during the holiday season. "It's great," said Giordano. "Just being a professional athlete, you're blessed with so many things, it's always good to give back to the kids. To see their smiles light up on their faces is great."

Reece wanted the opportunity to give back. "I love kids; I love helping people who are a little less fortunate and possibly just don't get to enjoy the same things that everyone else enjoys in everyday life," said Reece. "It's fun to be able to come out here and help."

It's important to the two players, and the Raiders organization as a whole, to show the community they care. "I think it's great for the organization to show that we do care," said Reece. "We're not just going out there and playing on Sundays, but we think about everything and think about everyone. We're just out here trying to help as much as we can and share the blessings that we have."

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