

Detroit Tigers slugger announces scholarship plan

DETROIT - To the cheers of hundreds of kids involved in Little League baseball, Detroit Tigers outfielder Magglio Ordonez announced Jan. 13 a new scholarship to help young people from southwest Detroit go to college.

Speaking mostly in Spanish to the largely Hispanic crowd gathered in the basement of Most Holy Redeemer Church, the American League batting champion announced the establishment of the Ordonez Family Scholarship, which will provide \$2,500 a year for full-time study at any college or university in the United States.

A different recipient from a southwest Detroit high school will be chosen each year, and the scholarship is renewable for up to four years, for a total value of \$10,000.

Ordonez encouraged the young people in their love of baseball and spoke to them about the importance of college.

The ballplayer arranged the scholarship through the Detroit Tigers Foundation and the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.

In addition, the Tigers will refurbish area baseball diamonds where Little League teams play.

Ordonez also answered questions from some of his young fans, such as Salvador Razo, 12, a pitcher on the seventh- and eighth-grade team at Holy Redeemer Elementary School.

Salvador gave a Holy Redeemer baseball shirt to Ordonez, who held it up for all to see, and asked how he is treated in his home country of Venezuela.

“Venezuelans love baseball,” Ordonez told him.

And the Tiger drew cheers when he answered another fan’s question about what kind of food he likes by replying, “Mexican food.”

The event was co-sponsored by the Southwest Detroit Business Organization. “Education is important in this community, and kids don’t always have the resources to pay for college,” said Kathy Wendler, the organization’s president.

Holy Redeemer baseball coach Ish Ledesma said Ordonez’s appearance “was just phenomenal – the whole neighborhood was lifted up by this.”

“This is really the first experience to have such a superstar come into the neighborhood,” Ledesma said.

He called the scholarship a great opportunity for southwest Detroit young people, and something that is badly needed in the area.

Monsignor Donald Hanchon, pastor of Most Holy Redeemer Parish, praised the Tigers for their commitment to fix up area baseball diamonds, including the one at Holy Redeemer, and praised Ordonez for sponsoring the scholarship.

“I can’t wait ‘til the first Cristo Rey grad gets a scholarship,” Monsignor Hanchon added, referring to the new Catholic high school slated to open in the former Holy Redeemer High School building this fall.

Fermin and Maria Sanchez were among the many local families who came to the announcement event, bringing their two sons, Eric, 6, and Yahir, 2.

“That’s good; it will give somebody a career,” Maria Sanchez said of the scholarship.