

GOODWILL GATORS

University of Florida Athletic Association's community outreach program, "Goodwill Gators" as it is affectionately known throughout Gainesville and Alachua County began in 1995. The purpose of the "Goodwill Gators" program is to provide local children, teenagers and University of Florida student-athletes alike, the opportunity to interact and learn from one another. The Goodwill Gators program provides student-athletes with quality volunteer opportunities that allow them to give back to the community. In turn, the community may utilize Gator student-athletes as positive role models, eager volunteers and motivational speakers.

Florida's Goodwill Gators program was recognized by the National Consortium of Academics and Sports and received the 1998 outreach and Service Award for the year. The program has also been honored with a White House Commendation for its community service.

The Gator soccer team has become especially visible, participating in a number of community events in the last year. Here are a few examples of programs that Florida student-athletes have participated in:

- Hospital visits
- Gator Toys for Kids
- Disability Awareness Week
- Alachua County Library's "Night of Thousand Stars"
- Special Olympics
- Alachua County Red Ribbon Campaign
- Blood drives
- Drug-Free youth programs
- Tutoring elementary students



Each year, Florida student-athletes sponsor a Field Day, an event where area children can spend a day playing various games with the Gators. Above, Alyshah Smith participates in a game and then enjoys lunch with the participants.



Melanie Booth does the Hokey-Pokey with a young participant at Gator Field Day.

348 UF student-athletes participated in 1,877 hours of community service in 2007-08, partnering with 43 schools, 27 civic organizations and 19 non-profit organizations.

Each holiday season, Florida student-athletes raise money to buy shoes and socks for children in area schools. Jenny Taylor helps a young girl try on her new pair at Lake Forest Elementary. Taylor also helps distribute shoes to children at Duval Elementary.



Angela Napolitano (left) and Anne Rose deliver sandwich boxes to Gainesville's Ronald McDonald House, which serves 30 families.



Gator student-athletes act as counselors at the Climb for Cancer, a chance for young cancer patients to come out and participate in a day of fun and games at the Florida athletic facilities. Above, a boy shoots for a soccer goal.