

PRESS RELEASE

Students Stress Fitness At Capital Park Event

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TALLAHASSEE, FL - At a recent Saturday-morning fitness fair, many of the volunteers were students from the College of Medicine. So was the organizer. Second-year student Andrew Cooke developed the event with residents of the Capital Park area, which is behind the fairgrounds on Tram Road, on Tallahassee's south side. Cooke knows the neighborhood well because he and fellow students have been coaching and tutoring Capital Park baseball players since last year. The fitness fair had a spirit of competition: Kids from the park's various baseball teams competed in running, long jump and other events, hoping that their team would be named the fittest one at Capital Park. "Though our primary goal is to teach baseball to our children, I believe that the secondary goal should be to teach them about living a healthy, physically active lifestyle," Cooke said in his proposal to the Capital Park board. "Though it is unrealistic to hope that every child we coach will become a professional athlete, I think it is perfectly reasonable to hope that our lessons will help them become healthy adults." The fair was modeled after the Presidential Fitness challenge, he said. It had been in the works since summer 2008 when Lewis Thurston, the park president, discussed the idea with him. Also participating were Sarah Cooke (Class of 2010, Andrew's sister); Miriam VanderMey (Class of 2011); and Noemi LeFranc, Shahab Virani and Aaron Hilton (Class of 2012). In addition to the events, there were healthy snacks and opportunities to learn health information. Cooke estimated 40 to 50 kids showed up. The children in the baseball league are ages 9-12, but younger and older siblings also participated in the fitness fair, as did other neighborhood children. Which teams were the fittest? The Rays took first place in sit-ups, push-ups and the mile run. The Reds won the long jump. And the Giants won the shuttle run.