

Rivers' foundation to help foster kids

By Kevin Acee
STAFF WRITER

Philip Rivers has quietly helped people, donating time and money to various causes over his six years as a professional athlete.

He always knew he wanted to establish something lasting, but he didn't want to rush into something just to do it.

"I wanted it to be something I'd really be passionate about," Rivers said. "... There are so many great things you can do. I wanted to have a real narrow focus. I wanted it to be something I really cared about."

The seed for that focus was planted on the Chargers practice field about two years ago, when Rivers was doing a photo shoot with two foster children for a calendar put out by San Diego County Adoptions.

Thing is, Rivers doesn't just do photo shoots. He doesn't just talk. He engages people.

He played catch with the two young boys, asked them questions and learned a little about their lives — how many schools they had been to and how many places they had lived.

"He was so good with them," said Heidi Quiroz, who works with San Diego County Adoptions. "He made them feel comfortable. It was very genuine."

Rivers, the father of five young children, would later ask for updates about the boys.

"That hits you," Rivers recalled of learning about the foster children's lives. "You kind of take for granted that every kid has someone to tuck them in at night."



Philip Rivers

Touched by that experience and another photo shoot the next year, and after much prayer and consideration, Rivers and his wife, Tiffany, will tonight in a news conference and program at SeaWorld launch the Rivers of Hope Foundation.

The stated goal of the foundation is to "help unwanted, abandoned and orphaned children find permanent loving homes and their own sense of self-worth."

Said Rivers: "I want to give them hope."

The Riverses have pledged their money to help ensure that children in foster care get a birthday gift and also financial support for activities they otherwise might not be able to participate in.

In partnership with Promises 2 Kids, Rivers of Hope will provide gift certificates for up to 900 foster children on their birthday in 2010.

And also in conjunction with Promises 2 Kids, the foundation will provide up to \$250 to help foster children be able to participate in activities like prom or to play sports.

"This one really hit home to me," Philip Rivers said. "Maybe a little boy needs a pair of cleats to be on the baseball team, or maybe a little girl needs a flute to be in the band. I want them to have that."

Moreover, the Chargers quarterback is giving his name to bring attention to the cause — which he says is to try to make sure every orphan in San Diego is adopted.

The last thing Rivers wants to be doing is talking publicly about how he is starting a foundation.

But he knows it is necessary.

"That is the hardest thing for me," Rivers said. "If I could just help without any of this (publicity). But I'm beginning to learn you have to see it as a foundation and a community doing something."

"With this cause, it's more about awareness than funds. The funds are important. But it's awareness about the issue. That's why we need to get the word out. People don't realize — I didn't realize — there are 4,200 kids in the system. And about 1,000 of them don't get a chance to go back to their families. That's 1,000 kids in San Diego that need to find a home. You hear about it all over the world, and that's all good. But there is a need right here."

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