

Wednesday, August 6, 2008

Angels' Hunter quietly gives \$50K for Placentia field

The softball field, at Kraemer Park, will open Sept. 12 and serve youth leagues.

By ERIC NEFF and BILL PLUNKETT

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

PLACENTIA – Torii Hunter's arrival in Orange County has done more for Placentia's children than giving them a great center fielder to watch.

Hunter quietly matched the Angels Baseball Foundation donation of \$50,000 to build Placentia's first softball field at Kraemer Park.

Hunter's \$50,000 donation did not become public until just recently – prompting the City Council to name the field after him during its meeting Tuesday night.

"He immediately contributed to the community, so we're more than happy to name the field after him," Mayor Scott Nelson said.

The field is being built by Magical Builders, which finds contractors to work for such community projects for free. Without the pro-bono work, the field would cost \$450,000.

Hunter has a longstanding relationship with the builder, so he learned very quickly about the project after he signed with the team.

His donation was not publicized. That suited Hunter just fine.

"I may be kind of crazy, but I'm a Christian and I don't believe in doing these things for show," he said after Wednesday's game. "I don't do it for the publicity. I do it because I want to give back. Baseball saved me."

Hunter overcame a rough upbringing, which motivates his drive to give back.

His father was a drug addict and it was only his baseball trips that brought him out of his often-violent neighborhood. Hunter has been nominated in the past for the Roberto Clemente Award, honoring Major League Baseball's best at giving back to the community.

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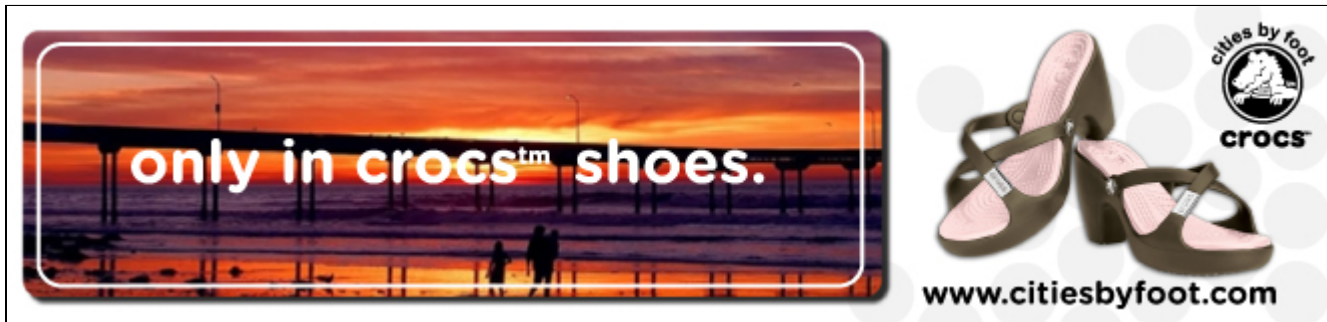
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"For me, baseball has changed my life, my family's life," Hunter said. "I want to give other kids the opportunity to experience the same things I've been able to experience. It's a blessing. I never forget where I came from and how important baseball was to me."

The field, scheduled to open Sept. 12, will be used for local youth programs.

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