

Hello, and welcome to the Brickyard. My name is Joey Sparks and I am a 16-year-old Junior from Hobart, Indiana. I am #37 on the Hobart Brickie football team. My grandfather, Dave Heuring, is the owner of Paul Heuring Ford, which has been Hobart's Ford dealer for 70 years. That is how I became familiar with the "Drive It Forward" video contest. Surprisingly enough, I am submitting this video on behalf of a neighboring school's football team and coach who have no idea that I am nominating them, and they would be completely stunned and eternally grateful if chosen as the winners. That school is Gary Westside High School, the Cougars, and here is our story:

Almost one year ago to the day, on September 20th, 2013, I was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma at Loyola Hospital in Chicago and was told I had a long series of chemotherapy ahead of me. I had just begun my high school football career and had only played two games in my life at the time of my diagnosis. One of those games was against the Gary Westside Cougars, a phenomenal group of players led by an inspirational and modest coach, Coach Johnson. Coach Johnson is a retired NFL player, who left his job as a Dean of schools in Illinois solely to work for and coach for Gary Westside. Westside's "Go Further" attitude went above and beyond for me when I was diagnosed. When we played Westside as our first game last year, being raised Catholic, I was humbled when Coach Johnson and the Cougars invited us Brickies to pray with them after the game, thanking God they had the opportunity to play with us and that no one was injured during the game. This team, from the heart of Gary, Indiana, has to work harder to raise money for their program due to their inner-city status and low-economic demographics. Recent budget cuts to their football program and lack of a successful booster club like ours in Hobart have forced the Cougars to use old equipment, some of it even donated by our Brickie football team. \$1000 could go a long way for the Westside Cougars!

During my first weeks in the hospital, I received countless text messages, phone calls and Facebook messages. One in particular still sticks in my mind, even though I was heavily medicated at the time that came from a Westside player whom I had never even met. He said that Coach Johnson had told their team that #37 from Hobart was recently diagnosed with cancer and that their whole team would be praying for me. He sent me some touching words of encouragement and promised he would keep the faith for me. This "Go Further" act of kindness and compassion from a complete stranger made me realize that this team and these coaches at Westside care about a whole lot more than just winning football games. The prayers and support I received from a fellow Northwest Indiana football team meant the world to me during the most devastating time in my life. Now that I am cancer-free and back on this beautiful field, I would like to thank, and hopefully reward, the Gary Westside Cougars for their genuine, "Go Further," positive attitudes.

They deserve to be rewarded because their program goes above and beyond football; they care about people like me. \$1000 would definitely help the Cougars "Go Further" in their football program, as I know they are in need of many supplies and equipment; some very basic. With \$1000, their team could possibly buy practice packs for all their players, which includes a team tshirt, shorts, sweats and hoodie so that they can all dress uniformly traveling to and from games and to wear at school to show their Cougar pride. Our coach, Ryan Turley, donates much of our team's used or un-used equipment to Westside because they were so heavily impacted by the school's budget cuts, which has prevented their program to purchase what they need.

If Westside is chosen as a worthy recipient of this "Go Further" award money, our head coach, team captains and I would like to show up at one of their team practices unannounced and surprise them with the \$1000. It would also give me the opportunity to thank them in person for being so supportive and inspirational and for all their thoughts and prayers this past year. I want the coaches and players from Westside to know how their simple acts of kindness and compassion for me did not go unnoticed and the encouragement from "football brothers" like them, I was inspired to keep my fist up and to fight the good fight until I won this January. I am respectfully asking Ford Motor Company and Team Detroit to reward Gary Westside, a team most deserving, and I know they will continue to "Go Further" and continue to inspire others as they did me. I will never forget them.

Henry Ford once said, "Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success." That quote just about sums up my experience and how I feel about the Gary Westside football team.

Thank you for watching this video and I hope you will consider my entry a winner.

All my life, I wanna be a Brickie..Work! Work! Work!