



## Perris Press Release

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### Perris Patriot Players Receive College Scholarships

Eight high-school graduates who learned the basics of football by playing in the Perris Patriots League were honored this week for receiving four-year scholarships at universities—including West Point—from one end of the country to the other.

The City of Perris formed a unique partnership with the Perris Patriots nearly a decade ago.

The City built and maintains a field complex for the league, a venue used by hundreds of grade-school players every year. The league raises funds to provide team uniforms, referees, coaches and camps for advanced instruction.

The arrangement has proven so successful that retired pro football Anthony Prior said the National Football League Players Association would like to see it become a nationwide model of public-private cooperation.

Hundreds of Perris Patriots football players have gone on the star at the high-school level and 14 have been awarded full scholarships to colleges and universities in the last three years.

"We love the City of Perris," Prior told the scholarship winners and their families who gathered at the City Council Chambers for a low-key celebration. "We love your model. We love you. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

Prior told the recipients that of the one million high-school football players, just 13,000 receive college scholarships.

"The game of football is about perseverance and virtue," said Prior, who played with the Minnesota Vikings, Oakland Raiders and New York Jets. "You have already succeeded. Now the stakes are even higher."

Each of the scholarship winners credited skills learned while playing with the Patriots for creating the foundation of their present success. They learned teamwork, leadership skills, good sportsmanship and the importance of maintaining good academics through the Patriots league.

Perris Patriots co-founder Andre Mitchell insists that the final 30 minutes of every practice session focus solely on academics and homework, even going so far as to provide tutors to make sure the lessons are learned. Mitchell's son, Andre Jr., 19, was among the scholarships.

Andre Jr. starred at Citrus Hill High School, where he earned all-academic honors as well as praise on the football field, where he was named most valuable player of the Mountain Pass League. He graduated with a 3.5 grade-point average. He will be leaving this summer to enroll at the University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff, where he's slated to play defensive back and major in criminal justice. Like the other recipients, his full-ride four-year scholarship is valued at more than \$100,000.

His dad gave the City of Perris a big shout-out for helping make his dream possible.

"We owe it all to you," he said. "Without your support, we would not be where we are today. This is an awesome day."

As a Los Angeles police officer who specializes in tracking down fugitives, Mitchell said he almost never sees the good side of human behavior in his job. He said he began the Perris Patriots league as a way to keep young men from Perris away from criminal activity.

Mitchell also praised G&R Recruiting in Stockton for working with the scholarship recipients and helping them find the right places to attend college.

Other scholarship recipients include:

**Jacob Cole**, 18, a graduate of Cal Lutheran High School. He will attend the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. Cole played three seasons with the Perris Patriots and later starred as a member of an 8-man football team, earning honors as a 5-foot 8-inch tall lineman, linebacker and quarterback. He graduated high school with a 4.0-grade point average.

**Davien Payne**, 19, a graduate of Citrus Hill High School. He will attend the University of Colorado as a running back. Payne said he learned the basics of football in the Perris Patriots league. "When I started out I didn't even know how to play," he said.

**Richard McCord**, 17, a graduate of Perris High School. He will attend Park University in Kansas City, Missouri, where he plans on running track and studying history with the ultimate goal of returning to Perris as a high-school history teacher. He said his time as a Patriot made him more respectful of adults.

**Darnell Murray**, 18, a graduate of Citrus Hill High School. He will attend the University of Texas, El Paso, on a football scholarship. Murray plays linebacker.

**Josh Ivory**, 18, a graduate of Notre Dame High School in Riverside. He will attend Alcorn State University on a football scholarship. Ivory plays running back.

**Ezekiel Herndon**, 18, a graduate of Bloomington High School. He will attend South Dakota State University on a football scholarship. Herndon plays defensive back.

**Joseph Hall**, 18, a graduate of Loyola High School in Los Angeles. He will attend D'youville College in Buffalo, New York, on an academic scholarship with the ultimate goal of becoming a doctor specializing in sports medicine.

The City of Perris was represented by Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers and Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin. "It is a remarkable achievement for these young men to pursue their college dreams," Rogers said. "They have achieved great academic as well as great athletic success. It is always a welcome occasion when we can come together to salute the outstanding youth of our community."



Davien Payne, Richard McCord, Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers, Perris Patriots football league co-founder Andre Mitchell, Andre Mitchell Jr. and Jacob Cole at the scholarship recognition ceremony at the Perris City Council Chambers Thursday night.