

Ontario Minister

Mike Colle, M.P.P.

I am pleased to write in support of Mr. Charles Bray who I have had the pleasure of knowing for approximately 20 years. Mr. Bray has been an outstanding community leader who has earned the respect and esteem of his peers. He has dedicated many years to working with the youth in various projects involving the development of athletic programs and has highly succeeded in regard. Many of the teens that Mr. Bray has worked with throughout the years can testify to the fact that they have benefited from Mr. Bray's programs, which have assisted them in their scholastic achievements as well as athletics.

It is with great satisfaction that I endorse Mr. Charles Bray in this Endeavour and I am certain that you will be as impressed as I have with his accomplishments.

Yours Truly

Mike Colle M.P.P.

Eglington – Lawrence

THE OXFORD COUNTY CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD

Woodstock, Ontario

St. Patrick's School PTA

October 11, 1994

We like to thank Mr. Charles Bray and his team for support in helping us to achieve our funding goal to building a new school gymnasium for St. Patrick elementary school. This project is excellent example of what community cooperation can achieve. The Sumo show was a great production, and we look forward in working with your organization in the near future.

Sincerely

Robert Gutcher

Director of Education

ST. JUDE'S SCHOOL

INGERSOLL, ONTARIO

May 29, 1995

To Whom It May Concern

This letter is to recommend Mr. Charles Bray and the Sumo Wrestling demonstration he provided at Sacred Heart School.

I found his demonstration to be informative to the students, providing both background history and an appreciation for the Japanese culture. I appreciated the fact that the demonstration was humorous for the children and was conducted in good taste.

Sincerely

John Luciani

Principal

Sacred Heart School

Testimonials Letters Below

NIAGARA GAZETTE
LIFESTYLE

10

Page designer:
Mark Doherty

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SEPTEMBER 2, 2012

WORTH FIGHTING FOR



JAMES NEISS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

TWO SISTERS: Master Charles Bray, with the Sumokids Foundation, referees a sumo practice session between sisters Kasha Spencer, 12, left, and Tracy, 14.

Former pro football player teaches kids character and courage by sumo wrestling

BY MICHELE DELUCA
michele.deluca@niagara-gazette.com

A former professional football player from Niagara Falls is devoting his life to teaching local children about courage, honor, and respect. And he's teaching them the same way that he learned it, almost by accident.

Charles Bray, once an offensive guard for the Toronto Argonauts, is a giant of a man, towering over his students while he shows them how to win and how to lose so that at the end of a match, you can't tell the winner from the loser as both look each other in the eyes and shake

hands. The point, Bray says, is to win with dignity and lose with grace, a lesson he admits, might be of benefit to more than just sumo students.

He teaches them for free. This summer he touched the lives of 150 kids who attended his camp at the Belle Center in Buffalo. Just a couple of weeks ago he debuted the World's Biggest Children's Sumo Festival on the lacrosse field at Smokin' Joe's on First Street in downtown Niagara Falls.

Bray said that after his nine year pro career, his life was transformed by sumo. As he practiced the deliberate squatting

and stretching moves which are much like yoga, he found himself changing inside. He noticed he was becoming calmer, more respectful, more compassionate, and more peaceful. He laughs when he admits that he first thought it was old age. Then he realized it was the sumo. He thought to himself, "Man, this is what I needed when I was in high school." And then he realized, "this is what all kids need today."

So, he is now a one-man army, fighting to win the hearts of the young. He is teaching them the ancient Japanese sport of sumo,

SEE SUMO ON PAGE 4C



MICHELE DELUCA/STAFF

TRANSFER OF POWER: Former pro football player Charles Bray is teaching young people honor and respect through Sumo wrestling, traits which he believes they will carry into their daily lives.

SUMO ...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

where two opponents fight to occupy a circle. Keeping low and agile, they attempt to push each other out of the circle. It is a sport, he says, that will strengthen them for — and make them better at — every other sport. It will also make them better at facing all the challenges of life, he said.

Yes, it's the same sport where Japanese men wear those funny belts called mawashi (loincloth) and not much more. He can't convince the kids to wear the belts, but they seem taken with the sport.

The Falls festival drew about 20 kids and their families. The Canadian team never made it, as they were stuck at the border, but a good time was had by all. The excitement has refueled his energy to grow the program. "I'm



JAMES NEISS/STAFF
PHOTOGRAPHER

PRACTICE MAKES

PERFECT: Sisters Kasha Spence, 12, practices sumo wrestling with her sister, Tracy, 14.

creasing in a huge smile.

"My dream is to expand this for kids from all over," Bray added, standing on the field at Smokin Joes. "Then maybe they won't be out here shooting each other. They'll be doing

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1995

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'I was conservative before conservative was cool.'

Gramm opens bid for presidency

BY RON HUTCHESON
Fort Worth Star-Telegram Washington Bureau

COLLEGE STATION — Kicking off the 1996 presidential campaign a year early, Sen. Phil Gramm declared his candidacy yesterday with a promise to slash federal spending and shrink government.

Returning to Texas A&M University, the school that lured him to the state nearly 28 years ago, Gramm presented himself as an un-

bending conservative who has what it takes to balance the federal budget.

"To paraphrase an old country-and-western song, I was conservative before conservative was cool," the Texas Republican said in becoming the first official candidate in the 1996 election season. "Unlike the current occupant of the White House, I know who I am and I know what I believe in."

Gramm, 52, began his push for the White

House from the city where he started his political career. In 1976, the former economics professor unsuccessfully challenged former Sen. Lloyd Bentsen in the Democratic primary.

Two years later, again running as a Democrat, he won election to the House. After switching parties in 1983, Gramm moved to the Senate in 1984.

"I've come back today to ask you for a final: (More on GRAMM on Page 21)



Fort Worth Star-Telegram / JEFFERY WASHINGTON

Sen. Phil Gramm gives a thumbs-up with wife Wendy and son Jeff.

Simpson's kids asked for mother

'Where's my Mommy?' the older of the two children asked as police drove them from the scene.

BY SHIRLEY E. PERLMAN
Newspaper

LOS ANGELES — Taken from their beds in the middle of the night as their mother lay dead in the yard, O.J. Simpson's two youngest children tearfully asked police, "Where's Mommy?" according to a police report obtained by *Newsday*.

About 2½ hours after the bodies were found June 13, 8-year-old Sydney turned to her 6-year-old brother at the West Los Angeles police station and said, "Justin, you know something happened to Mommy or she would have come for us by now," says the report, by an officer Vasquez.

Sydney then said, "Justin, I heard Mommy's best friend's voice and I heard Mommy crying."

Sources say that defense lawyers are seeking to call Sydney, now 9, as a witness in her father's murder trial to testify about the "voice" and the "crying."

But relatives of the girl's slain mother, Nicole Brown Simpson, oppose the move, saying they be-

(More on CHILDREN on Page 21)

Lockheed names plant president



Dain Hancock, 53, director of the F-16 pro-

Students struggle with sumo cum laude



Emanuel Yarbrough, a 6-foot-8, 620-pound sumo wrestler, gets pushed around by five students from Duff Elementary School in

Arlington. Yarbrough recently placed second in the world amateur sumo championships in Japan and is touring to promote the sport.

GOP leaders decide to spare food stamps

BY JENNIFER DIXON
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House leaders, under pressure from farm-state Republicans, abandoned a campaign promise yesterday to disband the food stamp program that helps 27 million Americans buy groceries.

The decision to preserve food stamps as a federal program came a day after a House committee voted to repeal several other federal nutrition programs, including school lunches, and return the money to the states in block grants.

Farm-state Republicans fought hard to keep food stamps, a \$27 billion program that serves 11 mil-

lion households at the federal level. They promised reforms that would tighten eligibility and cut the illegal trafficking, fraud and errors that drain an estimated \$3 billion a year from the program.

Under the GOP plan, which could go to the House Agriculture Committee for a vote early next month, low-income Americans who are eligible would continue to be guaranteed a monthly allotment of food stamps.

(More on STAMPS on Page 20)

Worn-out squad cars slow police officers

BY KATHY SANDERS
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

FORT WORTH — In a scene reminiscent of a TV crime show, police raced to the site of a fatal carjacking last month. But when their work was done several hours later, they could barely limp away.

As they departed, three police cars broke down. Two had to be towed, and the homicide sergeant's car had to be jump-started to get it running again.

"These cars are wearing out. The fleet is in atrocious shape," said homicide Sgt. Paul Kratz, who was

stuck at the scene. "It's getting to crisis proportions," he said.

As voters turn their attention to a proposed half-cent sales tax increase for new police equipment and other crime prevention measures, war stories abound about Police Department vehicles.

The driver's seat of a Crime Scene Search Unit, a four-wheel drive GMC Jimmy, fell partway through the rusted-out floorboard.

A patrol car's ball joint broke in two, causing the car's left side to

(More on CARS on Page 21)

Effort to sell V-22 to Japan questioned

BY MICHAEL D. TOWLE
Fort Worth Star-Telegram Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Just weeks after securing initial Pentagon funding for production of the V-22 Osprey, officials of Bell Helicopter Textron and partner Boeing Helicopters are trying to sell the tilt-rotor aircraft to the Japanese military.

Although Japan represents a huge defense and

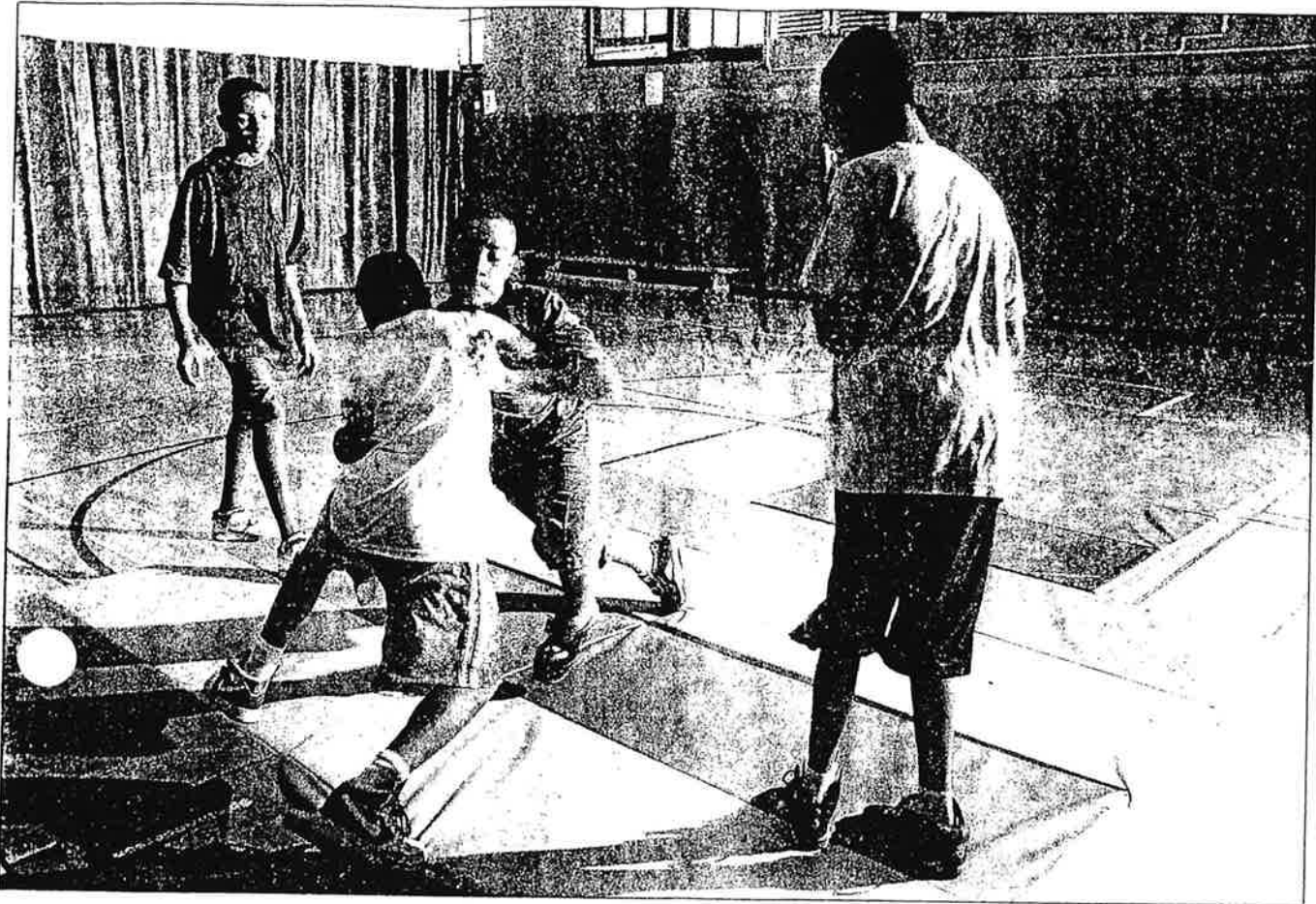


City's capture of stray criticized by activists

BY MARY BAKER
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

FORT WORTH — Animal control officers finally captured the celebrated stray German shepherd called "Bandit" on yesterday morning, but animal-rights activists are angry that a tranquilizer dart shot by a city worker could have permanently paralyzed the animal.

LOCAL YOUTH LEARN THE ART OF SUMO



ALBERT T. MCCRACKEN/CONTRIBUTOR

SUMO STYLE: Dreon House, 12, and Ronald Harris, 12, right, look on as Deion Thompson and Dashawn Stroye, 12, wrestle sumo-style Monday at Highgate Heights Elementary during sumo wrestling class that will teach them discipline.

Instructors use sumo wrestling to convey philosophy of respect

BY DANIEL PYE
pyed@gnewspring.com

Every Monday afternoon, the group of 10 rowdy 12-year-olds assembled in the gym at Buffalo's Highgate Elementary School and dressed in gym shorts and T-shirts look like they could be waiting to play basketball. But as soon as Henry Chapman III enters, dressed in a red martial arts robe, and shouts, "Where's my umo at?" the children answer as one.

"Right here!"

Assembled in a line from tallest to shortest, the boys participating in an after-school program called SumoKids bow respectfully to their instructor, who

begins with his own bow to them, earning their respect by giving them his own, Chapman said.

Physicality with philosophy

In sumo, unlike other martial arts, there's no striking or kicking. The participants square off in a crouch, then lunge and frantically push and shove one another, trying to come out victorious.

The first person to set foot off the mat or to touch the mat with any part of the body other than the soles of his or her feet is the loser, but the focus isn't on winning in the practice sessions.

"They learn to compete with honor,

win with humility and lose with dignity and grace," Chapman said. "The wins and losses in here only sharpen their skills, and the hand shake at the end of the match takes away the need for ego."

This type of concern for an opponent's welfare is evident when watching the matches. As Dashawn Stroye lost his footing and fell off of the mat in one match, his opponent, Ronald Harris, who less than a second ago was trying to topple Stroye to the ground, grabbed his friend's hand and supported him to break his fall onto the gym floor.

SEE **SUMO** ON PAGE 6A

SUMO ...

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Getting off the ground

The foundation was started by Charles Bray, a former NFL and CFL football player who found that sumo stances were similar to football's lineman stances and involved the same kind of pushing and hitting that he enjoyed. But in sumo, there was a wealth of ritual that taught humility, respect and sportsmanship, and that's what sets it apart from other physical activities, Chapman said.

"Other sports can keep you in shape, and that's great," Chapman said. "But if there's no fortifying philosophy, that training ends when you walk out the door and back into your life. This is something these kids can carry with them out into the world."

Bray met Paul McAfee, of the Kenmore-based eXubrio Group, during one of McAfee's seminars. After a quick meeting, the group saw the immense benefits the program could bring to area youth, said Robert Klingensmith, a partner within the group.

"They were in need of offices, and we met at a Starbucks to talk it over," Klingensmith said. "By the end of that meeting, we were planning on moving them in."

Keeping it free

More than a decade ago, the program started out in the pri-



ALBERT T. MCCracken/CONTRIBUTOR

SUMO STYLE: The SumoKids Foundation aims to bring the art of sumo wrestling and the accompanying philosophy to children who aren't able to afford it. Above, instructor Henry Chapman III goes through warm-ups with Ronald Harris, 12, and students at Highgate Heights Elementary Monday during sumo wrestling class that will teach them discipline.

vate sector. But, as with other martial arts, charging somewhere in the neighborhood of \$50 per month for the class limited who the instructors could reach. Chapman said students that don't have that kind of money are the ones most in need of training, so the SumoKids Foundation attempts to bring that out for free.

Chapman teaches five classes

on Mondays and four classes on Tuesdays to children with ages ranging from 6 to 18. The program is very low-cost since the only things that need to be paid for are a few mats and the cost of the instructor. But everything being done now is coming out of pocket from the organizers and funding is starting to run out, Chapman said.

"We need people like (Buffa-

lo) Mayor Byron Brown and leaders of the school districts to see the value," Chapman said. "We've got grant applications going out to keep it going because we don't want to charge people. We have to do this, because society shows us that you're guaranteed to lose if you do nothing."

Contact reporter Daniel Pye at 693-1000, ext. 158.



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EDWARD NORTHWOOD

May 18, 2006

Mr. Charlie Bray
President
SUMO Kids
1517 Kenmore Avenue
Kenmore, NY 14217

Dear Mr. Bray:

I am pleased to endorse the SUMO Kids program. Every Monday afternoon from 5-6 PM, twenty-two boys and girls, ages 5-12, engage in what is usually their favorite "personal development" elective as part of The Salvation Army Mitchell Owen After School Program.

The SUMO Kids program is teaching the children conflict resolution skills, self-control techniques, and self discipline. The things the children learn in the classes help build their self confidence and respect for others and provide them with good physical activity that challenges and strengthens them as well.

Recently the SUMO staff treated the children to a trip to West Seneca to see a demonstration of the SUMO program there. The children were so excited about the trip and the things they saw and participated in – they couldn't stop talking about it!

Thank you! to you and your staff for interacting with the children in such a happy and healthy manner. Your efforts are greatly appreciated by the children, the parents and by our After School staff. I look forward to our continued association and wish you great success in your search for continued funding.

Sincerely,

Carmelita Gary
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH SERVICES

June 8, 2011


To whom it may concern:

The Sumo Kids Program has been major part of our programming here at the Belle Center since July 13th 2009 Mr. Charles Bray worked wonders with all of the children that attended the Belle Center Summer Fun Program that year which made it a easy decision to make the SumoKids Program a constant year round activity. The Sumo Kids program emphasized things such as: self-discipline, conflict resolution, hard work, physical fitness and a host of other positive qualities that our children need to be exposed to on a much more consistent basis.

The SumoKids program kicked off our 4th annual Kids Day Festival that year as well, by holding their final sumo tournament of the summer for their parents to see what Mr. Bray had taught them throughout the summer. The children were also pleased to meet former World and North America Sumo Champion Emanuel "Tiny" Yarbrough and three time World Kickboxing Champion AJ Verel who was there to commend Mr. Yarbrough and Mr. Bray on the work they have been doing with the children all around the city of Buffalo. Now in 2011 I am very happy to report that the SumoKids program kicks off our Kids Day Fest every year and has remained a key component of our summer and after school programming here at the Belle Center.

Although the funding for the SumoKids program is extreemly hard to come by, Mr. Bray has shown a commitment to our kids in our community that is not matched by many and should be commended for the work that is done through his program with such limited resources.

If you would like to speak with me personally about the impact that SumoKids program has had on The Belle Center's staff or children please feel free to contact me at (716) 845-0485 ext 23.


James D. McNeil
ERHDC (The Belle Center)
SACC Director
104 Maryland St
Buffalo Ny 14201



May 24, 2006

Re: SumoKids

To whom it may concern,

When I was approached by Charles Bray from SumoKids to consider having a sumo demonstration for our students, I was somewhat skeptical of what would be the benefit to our students. Our student population is deaf, while many have additional disabilities. Some are challenged with emotional and mental health issues, others with physical limitations. Many are from families who suffer from poverty and are unable to participate in recreation activities. Fortunately, we went ahead with a demonstration! Since our initial demonstration, SumoKids have been a favorite of our students and staff. The true benefits of this program are many. The attitude, efforts, and commitment of Charles Bray and Henry Chapman III have been inspiring. We are thrilled with the program's impact.

In a day and age where sportsmanship and the concern for others have diminished, SumoKids teaches and celebrates respect, hard work, dignity, and grace. Winning at all cost is no longer the goal. Criticizing mistakes is no longer the focus. Self control, discipline, and learning life long lessons are keys to the program. The results of these lessons can now be seen in our student's daily interactions with others.

I would strongly recommend to any group or organization that values the concepts and beliefs of SumoKids to support this program. SumoKids enhances the mental, physical, and spiritual conditions of all those who give it a chance. We look forward to SumoKids ongoing relationship and involvement with our students and programs. I look forward to their return this fall and look forward to discussing the many benefits of this program with anyone who is interested in knowing more. Thank you!

Sincerely,



Paul M. Crowley

Director of Student affairs and Support Services



**PRO MARTIAL ARTS HALL OF FAME
& MUSEUM**

President / Chairman
A.J. Vérel - HoF '03

Vice - President
Lee Vasile

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Charles Bray
August 28, 2009

WHEREAS, The Pro Martial Arts Hall of Fame & Museum, as chartered through the New York State Department of Education, is dedicated to preserving and promoting the history and heritage of those who have made lasting contributions to the Sport of Martial Arts and Society.

WHEREAS, we pursue excellence in our efforts; we pursue efficiency in our commitment to serve the community; we are entrusted to be responsible and uncompromising in our values; to honor and enhance human life, to offer our talents to help improve the community we share.

And

WHEREAS, our tradition was built on honor, respect, pride, values, honesty and a strong work ethic. Charles Bray is the embodiment of our goal, to positively promote the Martial Arts through the SumoKids Foundation.

WHEREAS, we must live up to our responsibilities; we must also be trusted, both directly and through many duly constituted intermediaries, to fulfill our mission and exercise our custodianship to justify public trust.

NOW, THEREFORE, the President of the Pro Martial Arts Hall of Fame does hereby present Charles Bray, with the Community Leadership Award for his dedication to helping young people develop valuable coping skills for personal growth and achievement through educational sports activities.



Lee Vasile
LEE VASILE
Vice - President

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed this seal for the Pro Martial Arts Hall of Fame and Museum on this twenty-eighth day of August in the year 2009.

A.J. Vérel
A.J. VÉREL
President / Chairman



Harriet Ross Tubman School # 31
212 Stanton St.
Buffalo, New York 14212
(716) 816-3780 phone, (716) 851-3787 fax

Buffalo Public Schools

Mrs. Fatima Morrell
PRINCIPAL

JAMES A. WILLIAMS Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

June 5, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in regards to the wonderful SUMO program we have here at Harriet Ross Tubman School # 31. The SUMO program has been an integral part in infusing positive good behavior in our students who participated. The lessons learned through the SUMO program have reached over into the everyday classroom as far as participation, concentration, discipline and good behavior. Furthermore participants in this program looked forward to going to the program versus going home and hanging out on the corners or watching hours of television.

This program if instituted in all of our Buffalo Public Schools would lead to a turnaround in high suspension rates, lack of attendance and poor grades. The teachers of the students that participated noted that those students showed great strides in their self discipline, personal relationships with their peers and improved test scores. All in all the school community as a whole benefited greatly from this wonderful program.

In closing I would like to state that the addition of the SUMO program in the after school component here at Harriet Ross Tubman School #31 was a wonderful idea and we look forward to having them back next year.

Sincerely,

Casey Young Welch
Acting Principal

CYW ds