

Dad pinch-hits for his son, a slain cop

OFFICER'S FATHER DELIVERS BASEBALL EQUIPMENT DONATED TO LITTLE LEAGUE

By Sharon Noguchi
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Even in death, East Palo Alto officer Richard May Jr. is helping out the community he loved.

On Saturday, his father, Rick May, delivered a pickup truck loaded with donated baseball equipment to East Palo Alto's Jack Farrell Park. With the help of a half-dozen on- and off-duty officers, Rick May unloaded a pitching machine, infield rakes and bags of gloves, umpire gear, bats, caps, pants and belts.

Then he presented two checks -- together worth \$1,500 -- from San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande Little Leagues, to Tommie Roberts, president of Ravenswood Little League.

Richard May was shot to death, allegedly by a parolee, on Jan. 7 while responding to a report of a fight at a taqueria just a few blocks from police headquarters. A beloved officer in the small community, May in his year and a half on the East Palo Alto force had spent time helping residents -- particularly young people -- in trouble.

The elder May had collected the equipment from several leagues around San Luis Obispo, where he is assistant district director of Little League. League presidents had asked him if they could donate equipment to East Palo Alto kids.

Roberts' organization, it turned out, needed the help. The Little League for 9- to 12-year-olds runs on a \$5,000 budget but could spend \$15,000 to \$18,000, he said.

The equipment and checks will be a big help, he said. ``We struggle to try and get everything we need," said Roberts, 77, who has headed the league for more than 30 years, since his son Byron was 9.

The league uses diamonds at two city parks, Jack Farrell and Martin Luther King. When practice starts Monday, two teams will share each field.

More attention is being focused on East Palo Alto kids' needs, partly as a result of May's shooting, said East Palo Alto Lt. Rahn Sibley, who attended the ceremony on his day off Saturday.

Before he delivered the equipment, Rick May, along with wife, Lynn, and daughter Erin, also stopped at Oakwood Market, where co-owner Hamdi Nijem was having his afternoon barbecue, as several on-duty police officers and sheriff's deputies dropped by.

May had promised to deliver photos of his son to Nijem, who is assembling a Richard May scrapbook made up of snapshots and printouts of tributes from online guest books, for family and the police department.

``I'm going to give it to the police department and have every officer sign it," Nijem said.

Nijem and officer Brian Frayer also have collected more than \$140,000 for Richard May's wife, Diana, and three daughters. They raised the money by putting out more than 50 collection boxes in businesses from Palo Alto to San Bruno -- coffee shops, fast-food restaurants, even auto dealerships.

Rick May said he also wants to fund youth mentoring, which his son practiced every day. He said he is constantly hearing from formerly troubled youths his son had counseled or helped out of trouble and into a new life.

The elder May hopes to partner with a community group to match volunteers with youths in East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park.

“At best, we'll do a little of what he used to do,” May said.

East Palo Alto police officers are “really carrying on in the legacy of Richard,” said Chief Ron Davis, who also came in on his day off to witness the donation.

“We are still having to go through the grieving process. We have a lot of good days, and once in a while bad days,” Davis said. “We are grieving together as a family.”

Perhaps Saturday's donation ceremony was a part of that process.

Roberts said that as much as equipment is needed, that's not mainly what the league is about.

“We're not trying to make baseball players. We're trying to get kids together in a team concept so they can socialize together, and we show them how to lose,” he said. “You may be the best player, but you still can lose. These are life lessons.”