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BEST attracts big star power

ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP BENEFIT. Big names back charitable organization.

BY ANDY LOIGU
The Express-Times

BETHLEHEM! A bevy of former baseball players from the Mets, Phillies and Yankees and football players from the Giants supported the work of BEST, Inc., by attending the charitable organization's third annual scholarship reception at the Sands Hotel as celebrity guests on Sunday evening.

"We just show up and do the easy work," former Phillies catcher Darren "Dutch" Daulton said to an audience which included 30 well-known sports figures, 44 scholarship winners, 15 members of the BEST (Building Education Support Teams) board of directors, Miss New Jersey Katharyn Nicolle and more than 100 supporters.

"The co-founders, Judy Tierney and Billy Staples on this board, they do all the hard work and fundraising," Daulton said.

Through its annual fundraiser, BEST, Inc. hopes to raise \$15,000 to give financial assistance to students in need so they can obtain a college education, according to chairperson Robert Johnson. Numerous sports memorabilia items were auctioned off and most of the sports celebrities are taking part in a golf tournament this morning.

"One hundred percent of our proceeds go to students from the local area," Johnson said. "The board members pay dues to cover our costs and it is not just checks. We provide a support team of mentors to see the students through."

A recent U.S. Department of Education study found that students who are the first in their family history to attend college generally come from poor and academically challenged neighborhoods.

Maria Lopez of Liberty High School spoke about being the youngest of 11 children in a low-income family. She was the first in her family to attend college. Even having a baby did not

GOING DUTCH IN BETHLEHEM



Former Philadelphia Phillies catcher Darren Daulton signs an autograph for Kathy Dempsey and husband, Jim Dempsey, of Easton, during the BEST Inc. college scholarship reception Sunday evening at the Sands Casino Resort Bethlehem hotel. See a story about the event on Page D10.

keep her from graduating from Kutztown University in four years.

Katie Rivera shared the tale of a violent crime which victimized her family and gave her the resolve to graduate from Northampton Community College with an associate's degree in criminal justice. She now is seeking a bachelor's degree.

"The students' tales of overcoming obstacles are awesome," said former Phillies outfielder Jim Eisenreich.

Among the visiting sports celebrities were pitchers who made baseball history by giving up milestone home runs.

Al Downing, who was briefly a student at Muhlenberg College, had a fine career with the Yankees and Dodgers but is remembered for giving up Henry Aaron's 715th career homer, which put "Hammering Hank" ahead of Babe Ruth for the all-time lead.

Tracy Stallard, a pitcher for the Red Sox, Mets and Cardi-

nals, threw the pitch Roger Maris hit for his 61st home run in 1961 to take the all-time single-season record away from Ruth. Just a few days earlier, Maris tied the mark with his 60th off Jack Fisher. Both former pitchers attended Sunday's event.

Fisher is a former Easton businessman.

"A partner and I purchased a beat-up old bar and made some changes," Fisher said about opening up Fat Jack's in Palmer Township, which he described as "the first true sports bar in the Lehigh Valley."

He said he enjoys sports banter with the fans and has left his old memorabilia on display for their enjoyment, even though he no longer is an owner.

Also known for giving up the last of Ted Williams' many home runs, the former Orioles and Mets pitcher said he loved his time in Baltimore "because we were a young team that became a solid contender while

I was there."

He recalled being part of the "Kiddie Corps" on a pitching staff that included emerging stars Milt Pappas, Steve Barber and Chuck Estrada.

"I enjoyed playing with fine gentlemen like Brooks Robinson and Jim Gentile and we had an outstanding season in 1960 and surprised everybody by being in first place going into September. The Yankees got hot the last two weeks and finished ahead of us but we started a winning tradition," he recalled.

"I wish I still could have been there when they finally won the Series in 1968 but I do feel good about being part of the building process," he said.

Fisher also enjoys the distinction of being the man to make the first official pitch at Shea Stadium as a member of the Mets.

Former California Angels pitcher Jim Weaver, who also attended, recalled giving up the first career homer to a

young player on the Kansas City Athletics named Reggie Jackson.

Former Mets in attendance included Bud Harrelson (also a Phillie) and Rick Cerone (better known as a Yankee). Among the former Phillies attending were Bobby Wine, Milt Thompson, Dickie Noles, Art Mahaffey, Doug Clemens and Marty Bystrom. Former Yankees among the group included Jesse Barfield, Duke Sims and Frank Tepedino.

Giants' football fans got to meet a wide receiver and running back from New York's 1961 Super Bowl champions, Stephen Baker, along with Super Bowl MVP Ottis Anderson.

Phillipsburg High School graduate Ned Bolcar also took a bow. He was a linebacker on Notre Dame's national championship team in 1988 and went on to play in the NFL with Seattle and Miami.

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SPORTS

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