

# THE EXPRESS

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## Dawson likes baseball's future

**BEST SCHOLARSHIP RECEPTION.** Former major leaguers help honor program's first graduates.

BY BILL ROSS  
The Express-Times

**BETHLEHEM** | Building Education Support Teams celebrated the graduation of its first class this weekend and welcomed a new class of high school graduates with a scholarship reception Sunday night at the Sands Hotel and a golf outing scheduled for today at Green Pond Country Club.

As part of the program, BEST called upon a group of celebrities ranging from Baseball Hall of Famer Andre Dawson to Miss New Jersey

2013 Cara McCollum. Other former major league players on hand included Liberty's Gary Lavelle, Lary Sorensen, Lee Smith, Paul Blair and Steve Rogers.

Dawson, who was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2010, spoke about his career, the current state of the game and his current role in the game.

Dawson, who started with the Montreal Expos, was not surprised that the team eventually relocated to Washington, D.C., where it became the Nationals. Montreal was never a baseball town, though it did support the Expos when they were successful.

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### **BEST:** Dawson likes baseball's future

“Montreal is a hockey town, first and foremost,” Dawson said. “When the Expos were playing well, we would get good crowds. But if the team wasn't doing well, the fans would lose interest. I wasn't surprised that the team moved.”

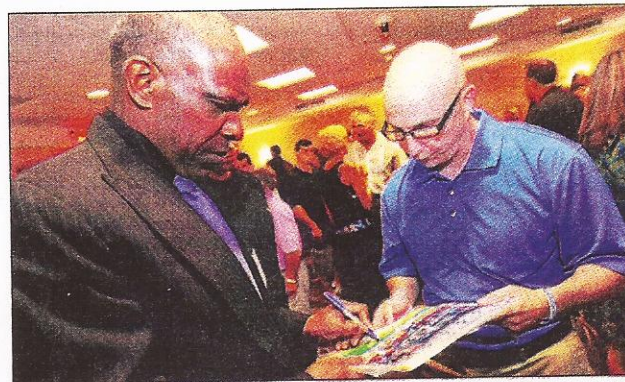
After playing for the lukewarm fans in Montreal, “The Hawk” flew to Chicago in 1987, where he played for the rabid Cub fans at Wrigley Field. Dawson responded with an MVP season, which included career highs of 49 home runs and 137 RBIs, as well as a Gold Glove for his play in right field. All this came while playing for a last-place Cubs team.

“It was a bit of a shock playing in front of the fans,” Dawson said. “They were so involved. It was very different from the fans in Montreal.”

One of Dawson's teammates in Chicago was Hall of Fame second baseman Ryne Sandberg, who managed the Lehigh Valley IronPigs for the past two seasons before becoming the Philadelphia Phillies' third base coach this year. Dawson was surprised that Sandberg became a manager.

“Ryne was one of my favorite teammates ever,” Dawson said. “He came to work every day and played hard. He could hit, hit for power and he could field. He was just a great player, but he was very quiet. He wasn't the kind of guy who would yell to get you fired up, he would just play and show you how the game was supposed to be played. So I was kind of surprised that he took the route he did, managing. But he is doing a good job, so it looks like it was a good decision.”

Dawson thinks that the game is headed in the right direction, especially after the “steroid era.” He feels that his statistics have not been “cheapened” by the inflated numbers of the steroid period, and feels that the punishments could be even harsher than they are.



EXPRESS-TIMES PHOTO | CHRIS POST

**Hall of Fame outfielder Andre Dawson signs an autograph for Bob Barclay of Easton during the fifth annual BEST scholarships fundraiser Sunday evening at the Sands Casino Resort in Bethlehem. For a photo gallery, see [lehighvalleylive.com/photos](http://lehighvalleylive.com/photos).**

He thinks that the future of the game looks bright, with young players ready to bring the game to the next generation of fans. The first name he mentioned was Bryce Harper of the Washington Nationals, who he said he just “loves to watch him play,” citing the way he plays the game (hard and emotionally.) Other young players he sees great futures for include Giancarlo Stanton (Marlins), Mike Trout (Angels) and Yasiel Puig (Dodgers) — although he thinks that Puig needs to play at a high level for a longer period of time before he has proven himself to be on the level of the others he mentioned.

Dawson currently works in the front office of the Miami Marlins. A native of South Florida, Dawson has been at home with the Marlins — with whom he finished his playing career in 1995 and 1996.

Sorensen, who is best known for playing with the Milwaukee Brewers, won a career-high 18 games for the Brewers in 1978, and has returned to his home state of Michigan.

Sorensen worked as a broadcaster for the Detroit Tigers, and now does freelance work with the team. He talked about the success of the current Tigers' team, particularly star pitchers Justin Verlander and Max Scherzer.

Sorensen praised Scherzer for the strides he has made from becoming a middle-of-the-road pitcher to an ace.

Verlander has been one of the game's dominant pitchers for several years, but has struggled at times this year. Sorensen has no advice to offer him, for a very simple reason.

“I can't give him any advice because I've never had stuff like he has,” Sorensen said. “It's one thing to offer advice to someone you feel you can help, but he is such a good pitcher that I can't fathom what it's like to be him pitching!”

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