

Washington Commanders Crucial Catch Activations



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Month Long Programming
- Crucial Catch game promotes early detection
- Hogfarmers warrior, Kennedy Keene



Washington Commanders announce month-long programming promoting early detection and celebrating survivors and those currently undergoing treatment as part of NFL's 'Crucial Catch' campaign

Throughout the month of October, the Washington Commanders hosted events dedicated to health equity and promoting early detection best practices as part of the NFL's Annual Crucial Catch initiative. To headline the month, the team hosted its Crucial Catch-themed game under the primetime lights of Thursday Night Football on Oct. 5 on Amazon Prime Video. Gameday elements and activations highlighted multiple cancer prevention efforts and paid tribute to cancer survivors and those currently undergoing treatment:

The Washington Commanders Charitable Foundation (WCCF) welcomed 160 AllStar Survivors whose lives have been affected by cancer, as well as those currently undergoing treatment, and their caretakers.

The WCCF, the Prostate Cancer Foundation, and other partners were onsite pregame in SeatGeek Legends Plaza, promoting early detection and ways to get screened in the region.

Fans received "I Fight For" cards in SeatGeek Legends Plaza

and can fill in the blank for who they are fighting for.

During the second quarter, the team recognized Nicholas, a 16-year-old boy who was diagnosed with osteosarcoma in his left femur in 2022. In August 2023, Nicholas concluded his last chemotherapy treatment and was declared cancer free on September 20. Nicholas rang a bell on-field in front of thousands of fans, recognizing he is cancer free. The announcement means he was able to resume high school as a junior.

At halftime, the All-Star survivors, those currently undergoing treatment, and their caretakers was celebrated on-field representing all the colors from the NFL's Crucial Catch logo. Lavender: All Cancers; Pink: Breast Cancer; Teal: Cervical Cancer; Navy: Colon Cancer; White: Lung Cancer; Purple: Pancreatic Cancer; Yellow/Gold: Childhood/Pediatric Cancer; Blue: Prostate Cancer.

Caly Bevier, an ovarian cancer survivor and a semi-finalist on "America's Got Talent" performed Rachel Platten's "Fight Song" during the halftime ceremony. Bevier also performed the National

Anthem prior to kickoff.

During the start of the second half, Callum, a 10-year-old diagnosed with Sonic hedgehog medulloblastoma in December 2019, served as the Kickoff Kid.

This year the team hosted a VIP experience for over 30 survivors. Each group watched the game from a suite:

- 10 Women All-Star Survivors of breast cancer from the American Cancer Society
- 10 Men All-Star Survivors of prostate cancer from the Prostate Cancer Foundation
- 10 kids in remission or currently undergoing treatment for various types of pediatric cancer identified by the Hogfarmers Foundation

Crucial Catch-branded scarfs were distributed as a gate giveaway on a first-come, first-served basis.

As a continued annual tradition, Zeta Tau Alpha student and alumni chapters from the DMV area distributed 40,000 pink ribbons to promote breast cancer awareness and prevention and a pink firetruck was on display pregame in front of Gate A.

The field design included

Crucial Catch themed in-bowl banners and goal post wraps.

Commanders players and coaches wore official NFL-issued Crucial Catch sideline gear representing all cancers.

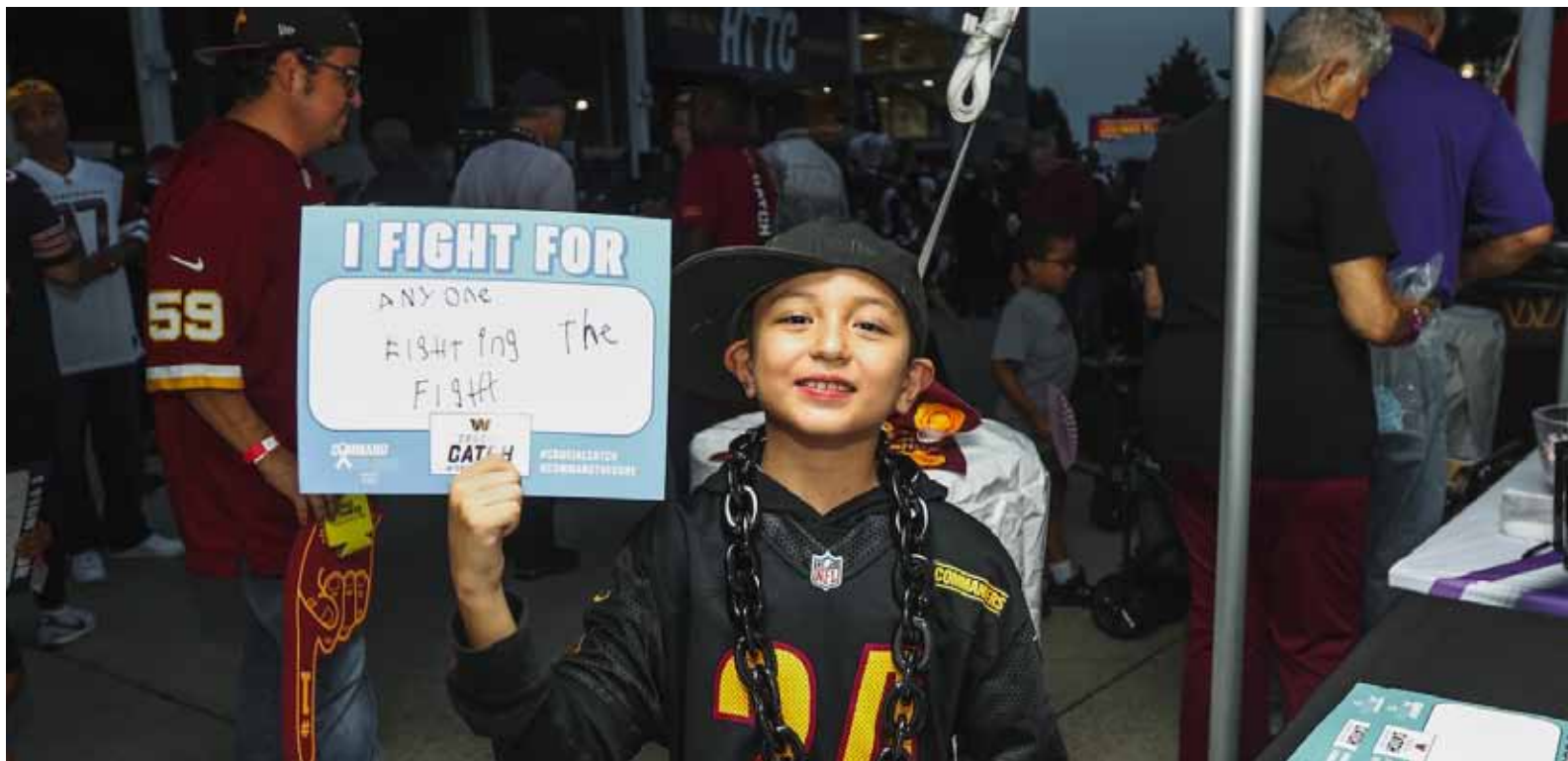
The Command Force entertainment team performed a special routine to "Survivor" by Destiny's Child with recognition of the Crucial Catch multi-colored logo representing all cancers. The team wore Crucial Catch apparel and used rainbow colored pom poms throughout the game.

Proceeds from the WCCF 50/50 raffle benefited Children's National Prince George's County.

Fans are encouraged to use the hashtags #HTTC and #Crucial-Catch for a chance to be included on the video boards in-game for all themed Crucial Catch activations.

Outside of gameday, the Commanders hosted four additional events throughout the month of October: A Hope Kit Luncheon, an event at the Childrens Inn at NIH, a Crucial Catch and Minority Cancer Awareness Press Conference, and a prostate cancer event

» see **CATCH** | **C3**



CATCH

From page C2

in partnership with Robert F. Smith.

On Monday, October 16, the Commanders hosted a Hope Kit Luncheon at DC Prime, presented by VHC Health. The 2023 women All-Star Survivors, significant others of Commanders coaches and players, and Commanders staff packaged 300 Hope Kits for women going through treatment for breast cancer in the DMV area. The Commanders collaborated with VHC Health and the National Breast Cancer Foundation to pack and distribute the Hope

Kits. VHC Health distributed 100 of the kits to women undergoing breast cancer treatment in the DMV.

On Monday, October 23, select Commanders players and 2023 team dog Goldie visited The Children's Inn at NIH, an organization that provides free lodging to children and young adults that are receiving treatment at NIH in Bethesda, MD. Commanders players visited the clinic's pediatric unit and interact with kids by partaking in football and fall-themed activities including pumpkin carving and painting.

On Monday, October 30, the Commanders and the NFL conducted a Crucial Catch and

Minority Cancer Awareness Press Conference at a neighborhood health community center in Alexandria, Virginia. Each year the NFL funds CHANGE grants to provide screenings and resources to underserved communities in all 32 markets. Commanders Team President Jason Wright and Vice President of Community Relations and Executive Director of the Washington Commanders Charitable Foundation Valerie Biberaj gave remarks and tour the local facility that received this year's NFL CHANGE Grant.

On October, the WCCF and Washington Legends (alumni) hosted an event with Robert F.

Smith, the Conference of National Black Churches, and the Prostate Cancer Foundation, promoting early detection and ways to get screened in the local DMV community. This partnership stems from philanthropist and investor Robert F. Smith, who donated \$1.9 million toward the development of a test that helped identify the likelihood of developing prostate cancer over a lifetime. Washington Legends, alongside the Prostate Cancer Foundation and the Conference of National Black Churches, launched an early detection awareness campaign. Additional details was announced closer to each event.



Hope Kit Luncheon Gallery



Hope Kit Luncheon Gallery





‘It’s really important for us to be here’: Crucial Catch game promotes early detection, highlights those affected by cancer

By Hannah Lichtenstein

Ahead of the Commanders’ Thursday Night Football game, Legends Plaza offered a space for fans to receive cancer awareness education and pay tribute to loved ones who have battled the disease.

“Cancer has had a big part in our lives, so it’s just special being

able to stand over there and talk to somebody and know that we’re not alone,” said Charleston, West Virginia, native Chris Patterson. “We have may have lost our parents to cancer, but we’re going to see here tonight that we’ve got family, friends and support around us in the burgundy and gold, so it’s gonna be awesome.”

That sense of community support around the impacts of cancer was what Week 5’s Crucial Catch game was all about. The league-wide initiative, which unfolded in a first-of-its-kind way at FedExField on Thursday, focuses on promoting early detection, celebrating survivors and highlighting the fight of those

currently undergoing treatment.

Specific for the Commanders this year is increased attention on the intersection of cancer and health equity. That aspect of Crucial Catch was top of mind for Nefertari Carver of Robert F. Smith, who was posted up in Legends Plaza.

“It’s really important for us to be here because prostate cancer

» see **CANCER** | C7



CANCER

From page C6

disproportionately impacts Black men and we figured there's no better place to connect with the communities we want to reach than coming to a Commanders game," Carver said.

One in 6 Black men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer as compared to 1 in 8 white men. Black men also die at twice the rate as white men from the disease. With these harrowing statistics in mind, the presence of Robert F. Smith, the Prostate Cancer Foundation and the Conference of National Black Churches at an event with a large number of Black male fans in

a predominantly Black Prince Georges County could really be seen as having potential life-saving impact.

The attention around prostate cancer that evening represents a larger shift in the Commanders' cancer awareness initiatives. This October, efforts have expanded to include several types of cancers and different communities affected.

Those impacted by pediatric cancer, as another example, were recognized with a handful of touching moments on Thursday, including the ringing of an end-of-treatment bell by Nicholas, a 16-year-old boy who recently finished his treatments for osteosarcoma.

"The end of treatment bell symbolizes being ready to get

back to normal life," said Chris Bryant, the co-founder/director of the Hogfarmers Charitable Foundation, which hosted Nicholas. "To watch him do it in front of 60,000-plus fans cheering him on was absolutely priceless."

Nicholas was wearing a yellow/gold shirt when he rang the bell, which was about more than just repping Washington. The NFL's Crucial Catch logo includes yellow/gold (pediatric cancer), navy (colon cancer), lavender (all cancers), pink (breast cancer), teal (cervical cancer), white (lung cancer), purple (pancreatic cancer) and blue (prostate cancer).

All of these colors came together in one of the most powerful displays on the night

during halftime. Wearing their respective Crucial Catch colors, survivors, caretakers and those currently undergoing treatment were recognized on the field. The soundtrack to their celebration was "Fight Song" by Rachel Platten, which was sung by ovarian cancer survivor and America's Got Talent semifinalist Caly Bevier.

From delivering surprises and delights to promoting critical education, Week 5's Crucial Catch game created memories that made those affected by cancer feel seen, heard and loved.

"These are experiences I've never had, and I'm so very happy," said breast cancer survivor Janice Johnson. "I'm just overwhelmed with joy today."

Crucial Catch Game Gallery



Crucial Catch Game Gallery





Hogfarmers warrior Kennedy Keene celebrated end of leukemia treatment with visit to Commanders practice

By Hannah Lichtenstein

Kennedy Keene could not stop smiling during her visit to OrthoVirginia Training Center at Commanders Park. The joy emanating from the little girl was an emotional scene considering the two-year cancer battle she has endured.

“It’s amazing having her here for this,” her aunt Susan said. “She definitely deserves it after the two years she’s been through. So, I’m just happy that she’s having fun, having a great time. I’m thankful for that.”

Just last week, Kennedy, 9, finished up her active treatment for Leukemia and had her port

removed. The Commanders Charitable Foundation and the Hogfarmers Charitable Foundation coordinated a visit to practice for her family to celebrate the milestone. Thursday also marked the beginning of a new chapter for Kennedy that is filled with many more exciting experiences out in the world.

The Keene family’s nightmare began in May 2021. A sense of something wrong began to brew a few months earlier when Kennedy had experienced pain during gymnastics practice. After her pediatrician ran bloodwork following an unexplained fever, they determined Kennedy’s hemoglobin levels were dangerously low. Then came the Leukemia diagnosis.

“The day after diagnosis,

you’re just going. Phase 1. Boom. You’re getting wheeled down for surgery to get that first port and spinal tap,” Kennedy’s father Donnie said. “Nobody should ever have to go through that.”

And though nothing can fully remove the pain and stress of watching a child battle cancer, support of all kinds has helped Kennedy and the Keene family on their journey. One of those crucial sources of support has been the Hogfarmers Charitable Foundation, a pediatric cancer non-profit organization that supports families in Virginia, Washington D.C. and Southern Maryland.

The Hogfarmers got connected to the Keene family, who are Commanders fans, through another family of Commanders fans they

had helped. Since earlier in the year, the Hogfarmers have sent her gift cards to her favorite food places, gas cards for her parents, a custom shirt to assist with port access, toys and more.

Though her treatment plan limited her ability to enjoy Hogfarmers’ outings, there was hope that one day she would be able to come out with the pig-nose-wearing squad to have some fun. Seeing that day arrive on Thursday brought so much happiness to everyone who had been involved in the visit to Commanders’ practice.

“She’s come a long way. She’s had a pretty extensive treatment plan, and for her to be able to come

» see **FARMERS** | C11

FARMERS

From page C10

out her and enjoy something like this and be active, it's what you want. It's what you want the ending to be," said Hogfarmer Chris Bryant. "Sometimes it doesn't go that way, but when it is, it's very nice."

Kennedy looked "back to her old self" according to dad Donnie as she dished out instructions, played on the sideline and helped close out the session with Coach Rivera. Following practice, she got to spend time with one of her favorite players, KJ Henry. Kennedy, whose mom went to Clemson, is a huge Tigers fan, and she was so excited to watch Henry get drafted by the Commanders in April.

The two played catch, talked about the purple streaks in her hair (Henry's favorite color) and chatted about how they needed to stick together as the only two

Tigers fans in the building on the day. He gave her his practice-worn gloves, signed items she had received in her goodie bag and took pictures with her.

Kennedy's visit wrapped up with the news that she and her family would be put up in a suite for the game of their choice this season. Another day full of making memories with the Commanders is already on the books. This one will always hold a special place in the hearts and minds of the Keenes, though.

"To be able to do something like this, it's amazing," Donny Keene said through tears.

"There's no words for it. She got to meet some players you'd never thought she'd meet...the experience of a lifetime. Something that we'll remember forever."





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