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Seldovia Sea Otters vs. the Nanwalek Eagles

by *Charity Winters*



Last Monday, the kids of the Boys and Girls Club had a special treat when the 3rd-5th grade class from Nanwalek paid a visit to play some basketball! Fortunately, the weather held up long enough to provide a beautiful day for travel both in and out of Seldovia for the team (despite yet another eruption from Augustine!). Here's the scoop on how all this came about...

The Nanwalek Eagles were accompanied by their coach and teacher, Geoff Glover, his wife, Melina, and a few parents and siblings. Games like this have been held in the past between Nanwalek and Seldovia but they usually involved the high school. Geoff was the brains behind this new idea of bringing over the younger kids. Before Glover came to Nanwalek to teach, he taught for a year in Tyonek. It was there that he first gathered a team from his students and set up a game between another village school. This year, his first

Geoff's wife, Melina came along to support the team. She and Geoff are a young, newly married couple who have been in Nanwalek for 2 years now and they are hoping to stay for a long time, if not for good. Melina helped to organize most of the fundraising activity for the team. I asked her what she thought of the event. "I think it is great! The kids were really excited but I think the reality of actually being here will turn into more excitement for coming next year." She says it has done great things for the kids "teaching them hard work and a competitive spirit." She even pointed out that she was surprised at some of the kids that actually stuck with it. One boy started out with the thought that he would probably drop out saying, "I so lazy!" but he was there with the team today sporting a blue uniform. The kids who attended the game were John, Xavier, and Tania Romanoff (siblings), Antone Ukataish, Shoshanna Huntsman, Daniel Active, Ivana Ash, and Elaina Petereson.

thought was to set up a game between Nanwalek and Tyonek, but his old school wasn't interested in the idea. So, he decided to try Seldovia. He contacted Paul Chissus from the Boys and Girls Club with the idea and set the plan in motion. Games were held from 11-12pm and 2-3pm with a 2-hour lunch break, pizza provided by the Club. Originally, the kids were to stay the night at the Club but that idea fell through.

Glover compiled a team out of the interested boys and girls in his class. They held practices in the school gym every weekday for the past month. Students who wanted to come to the practices could participate in the game. The team began with about 11 students and dwindled to a dedicated 8 by the time of the game. But the school and parents rallied around the little team with support and fundraisers for the cost of the trip. On Valentine's Day the class sold roses and made their first \$1000. They decided to use this money to buy the kids their very official looking uniforms that sport their teams name, school colors, and each kid's number. They also held a Kid's Tournament and several bake sales to raise the rest of the money.

On Seldovia's side of the story, Paul Chissus pulled together most of the people that made it happen. Mark Janes helped out as a supervisor and referee for both games. Tim O'Leary was the coach for the Sea Otters and held several practices to get the kids ready. The Sea Otters that participated were Sarah and Seth O'Leary (siblings), Seth Suydam, Leslie Peterson, Kaitlin Hecks, Lily Kroll, Calem Collier, Ginger Moffet, Shayla and Adam Ogle (siblings).

Now you're probably wondering how the games went: Nanwalek won both! The first game was a close 8-10. "They're good!" Sarah O'Leary exclaimed. "I have no doubt they will beat us in the second game too!" And sure enough they did. The second game ended with a score of 5-13. But you could tell all the kids had a blast playing the games. There were plenty of smiles and cheers from both sides of the bench as the games went on.

Geoff is hoping to continue with this as an annual event for Nanwalek. Eventually he would like to see the interest reach the older students and get an official high school basketball team going in the future.





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