



**Jerome Bettis:
A Genuine Role Model Both On And Off The Field**
By Daniel Casciato



There's no denying that Pittsburgh Steelers running back Jerome Bettis is an icon in the region. Already the NFL's fifth leading rusher of all time (13,294 yards as of December 4, 2005), the "Bus" has endeared himself to every Steelers fan nationwide.

Raised in Detroit, the bruising running back played football in high school and earned a scholarship to attend the University of Notre Dame. As a first-round draft pick by the Los Angeles Rams in 1993, Bettis was named the "NFL Rookie of the Year" and the team MVP.

He was later traded to the Steelers in 1996, where his legend grew. After becoming a Steeler, Bettis earned MVP honors for the team, and was named All-Pro by College & Pro Football Weekly and USA Today. He also became a member of the All (John) Madden Team, and played in five Pro-Bowls. Of the 18 running backs drafted in 1993, Bettis is the only one who remains, which is testament to his dedication to the game.



Although his "blue collar" work ethic on the field made him an instant fan favorite,

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there are others who view him as a hero for his performance off the field. According to his aunt, Gloria Bettis, he participates in many off-the-field charitable activities, including many programs through his "The Bus Stops Here Foundation." Gloria Bettis is the director of the foundation, which was established in 1997 to help troubled and underprivileged children foster self-esteem and self-reliance.

"Jerome set this foundation up to help many troubled and underprivileged children and give them the opportunity to succeed in life," she said from her home in Detroit. "He's dedicated himself to improving the overall quality of life for troubled youth."

The foundation has helped raise funds for Pressley Ridge Schools, a local non-profit agency that provides educational programs for troubled children in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and Maryland; conducts a "Cyber Bus" Computer Literacy Program; established the "Jerome Bettis Friends Forever" Scholarship, which helps place students in colleges and universities around the country; and many other programs.

Gloria Bettis said that her nephew is most proud of the "Cyber Bus" Computer



Literacy Program, a collaborative effort between the foundation and the Carnegie Mellon University School of Computer Science. In 2000, the foundation presented 31 students from Columbus Middle School in the North Side with Dell computers for participating in the program.

"I've always wanted to see if I could make a difference in some kid's life," Jerome Bettis once said. "I hope that by providing underprivileged kids the chance to build a computer from scratch, they'll gain the confidence and self-esteem to do great things."

Bettis is involved in numerous charitable operations in both Pittsburgh and Detroit. In addition to "The Bus Stops Here Foundation," he hosts two summer football camps in western Pennsylvania and Detroit each year. He has also created "Save Children Opportunity Recreation and Education" (S.C.O.R.E.), which helps rejuvenate neighborhood parks and recreation centers, upgrade computer systems and provide scholarships.

In 2002, the foundation funded an \$118,300 renovation of the Jefferson Parklet in the North Side, which was damaged by vandalism and neglect. They also renovated a full basketball court and created a wall for handball and other sports.

"We're all very proud of the work he's done," said Gloria Bettis.

He doesn't seek any publicity for it, but Bettis has been recognized for his dedication to the community. In 1997, Jerome Bettis received the "Pittsburgh Dapper Dan Man of the Year Award" for his work on social issues in the community and for his foundation work.

In 2002, he was named the winner of the "Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award" in recognition of his playing excellence and off-the-field community service. The award is named after legendary Chicago Bears running back Walter Payton, who died in 1999 of liver cancer.

"I believe in being a role model for kids to look up to, and feel it is my responsibility

to give back to the community,” Bettis said at the awards ceremony. “I always try to conduct myself in a proper manner, because I know kids do look up to me.”

For more information about The Bus Stops Here Foundation, visit www.thebus36.com.

