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Life in the Fastlane

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Touchdowns, Homeruns & Cheers Peachtree Ridge Youth Athletic Association Scores with the Community

Written by Heather Loveridge
 Photos by Penny Pix Photography

The article also includes:
 information on Peachtree Ridge Park, Life in the Fast Lane and two profiles of PRHS athletic players (Kevin Pierannunzi and Tyler Droll)

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Casey Coffey knows the parks near his Suwanee home like the back of his hand. After all, most of his free time there. With four kids that play virtually every sport, Coffey's either chauffeuring them to a game, coaching a game, helping set up before a game, or doing an myriads of tasks. But he loves it and wouldn't trade his life for anything.

He and his wife Ene have five children: 13-year-old Drew, 10-year-old Jordan, 10-year-old Alexandra, 8-year-old Zane and 2-year-old Nicole.

"Everybody's involved in virtually every sport: football, baseball, softball, cheerleading, soccer, basketball," Coffey said. "They do it all - that's all we do is go from one park to the next. Saturdays are filled up."

A dedicated sports dad, Coffey coaches baseball and basketball while Ene is a cheerleading. The family had been playing in the Duluth baseball league but when the Peachtree Ridge Youth Athletic Association began, they switched since it was close to their home.

Coffey became a staunch supporter of the association from the start. He was one of the first members, serving on the baseball board for two years.

"We live here in the Peachtree Ridge cluster, and I wanted to make sure that I could help try to contribute to growing a new youth organization," he said. "This community has blessed wife and me with supporting our businesses here in Gwinnett, and it's just something that we're able to give back and be able to contribute to try to make the extracurricular activities sporting events in the parks a better place for all the kids here in the Peachtree Ridge cluster."

As the owner of Gwinnett Place Ford and Gwinnett Place Nissan, Coffey has donated a convertible Mustang each year to the Young Life raffle, which also is one of the association's fundraising events. A-A is also a sponsor of the event.

"Casey has given a lot of money to the association, and not even just money but he's the one out there dragging the fields, lining the fields, working the concession stand," said Shari D. the association's treasurer, "He'll announce, he'll coach, he'll do whatever. He's on both sides always, he's not just writing checks. He takes it a step further."





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"If I had to describe the perfect youth family, it would be the Coffey family. That's for sure even tell you how many times when I'm working on something, and I'm not knowing how where to go or just want to kind of run it by somebody to see if I'm on the right track - Call first call."

A native of Kansas and a political science graduate of the University of Missouri at Columbia never dreamed he'd be in the car business.

He intended to go to law school and become a sports agent. When a fraternity brother's brother-in-law asked Coffey to help him sell Cadillacs one summer, Coffey refused - that was the last ever wanted to do. However, after the dealership owner twisted his arm, Coffey relented. In one month he sold 25 cars. He never made it to law school.

"I stayed there. The gentleman who owned the company was Cecil Van Tuyl, and he was a more dealerships across the country. Long story short, he is my partner now - actually his and I are partners," Coffey said. "We are part of the largest privately held automotive group world. We have 62 stores across the country. Mainly in the South: Phoenix, Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, Orlando, etc."

In 1999, Coffey heard about two struggling dealerships in Atlanta. The opportunity to sell in a growing, emerging, favorable-weather market proved too hard to resist, and that year he opened the Ford and Nissan locations. Both locations were selling 80-100 new cars a month and 300 used cars - not ideal. Today, between the two stores, more than 1,000 cars are sold a month.

"Our key to success is people, people, people. It's all about people," he said. "Doesn't make a difference what brand you're selling, how big a building you have, what your location is, it's all about people. We have some really, really great people that make this business what it is. We're blessed."

Much of Coffey's dedication to helping others is due to his Christian principles. He and his wife are members of Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, and he has instilled in his family the importance of fairness, kindness, charitableness, giving back and being involved.

"There's nothing better than walking into a grocery store or walking into a restaurant, and seeing a child who was 7 years old and is now 10 or 11 walks up and says 'Hey, Coach Casey.' Those are great moments," Casey said. "We'll always stay involved. We're going to do what's necessary to make this thing through so we have really a world-class park."