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## Softball 'Cats Present Earnings To 18 FORE Life

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*By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor*

The spirit of giving is alive and well at Dexter High School.

The DHS Softball team followed in the footsteps of both the middle and high school volleyball teams and held a 'Pink' game to raise money for the Ben Kruse 18 FORE Life foundation, a local organization dedicated to helping families that are battling cancer.

During the Lady Bearcats' all day 'Swing Pink!' tournament, held on March 31, the squad raised \$4,371.50 for the charity.

Head softball coach Leonard Morse noted the success of the tournament, and fully expects to make it an annual event.

"It was phenomenal what we were able to do; as far as the tournament, all the teams have asked to come back for next year. Hopefully we'll be able to double the number of teams that were in it and move to a 16 team tournament next year," Morse said. "I didn't know what to expect; we far-exceeded the amount of money that I thought we would ever make. I didn't know how well it would take off in the first year."

Morse noted that one of his players, Ashley Brown, proposed the idea of having the tournament be a fundraiser after the first middle school 'Dig Pink!' game.

"I've been wanting to hold a tournament for the last two or three years; last year, after the middle school did their Dig Pink game, Ashley Brown suggested that we do something similar to that with the softball," he said. "The girls jumped on board, and Ashley herself sold 38 shirts at \$15 apiece. Portageville high school sold over 100 shirts. Most of the money that we raised was from concessions and the sale of the shirts."

Scott Kruse, current DMS principal, founder of 18 FORE Life and brother of the late Ben Kruse, said the outpouring of compassion from area high school and junior high students has been overwhelming.

"It's crazy. It started with the middle school last year, and it happened right around the time that I was hired and got to come back home," Kruse said. "I thought to myself 'That's really neat', and I was kind of glad they did it before I was here. The high school took off with it, and Richland and Bernie both started doing it. Now, with Leonard and the softball team, I love seeing it, because they know that they're doing something to help people."

Last year, 18 FORE Life gave out over \$150,000 in 'love offerings' to local cancer patients; Kruse noted that the organization sends out the offerings in \$1,000 increments, and that the multitude of benefit athletic events put on by area high schools accounted for a good portion of the total donated amount.

"Last year, the middle school volleyball team raised \$2,100, this year they did \$5,300," Kruse said. Bloomfield raised \$1,000, Bernie raised over \$400, and Richland did a volleyball and a basketball game, so you're looking at over \$15,000 dollars."

"The way I look at it, that's fifteen families that we can help, because we send out love offerings \$1,000 at a time," he said. "Last year, in total, we sent out \$153,000."

***Photo Above: Members of the DHS Softball team gathered Thursday morning to present Scott Kruse with the funds raised during the first annual Swing Pink Tournament. Pictured are (from left): Cierra Learue, Becky Anderson, Ashley Brown, Scott Kruse, Riley Rickman, Emily Triplett, Whitney Layton and Maddie Christian.***

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