

Nationals spend time with children from Wheelchairs 4 Kids

By [Amanda Comak](#) - The Washington Times

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In all the hoopla that surrounds Opening Day and the start of the season, this item got pushed back a little bit. But I didn't want it to get entirely overlooked.

Spring training is long (as you may have heard) and can tend to drag toward the end. But one of the most impressive things we saw all spring in Viera was nine-year-old Robie Whiting throw out the first pitch on March 24, in one of the final [games](#) of the spring.

Whiting, who was representing Wheelchairs 4 Kids, has spastic quadriplegia. The issue, which is part of his cerebral palsy, affects all four of his limbs. Whiting had major surgery in Feb. 2012 and started walking eight months ago.

With Nationals bench coach Randy Knorr behind [home](#) plate to catch, Whiting was helped out to the space between the plate and the mound and actually threw the ball to Knorr. It was amazing and inspiring, and even earned him an ovation from the pressbox (where cheering is strictly forbidden).

We came to [learn](#) later that Knorr's wife, Kimberly, works closely with Wheelchairs 4 Kids and while Whiting's first pitch may have been the most obvious success of the day, for the kids it was something different altogether.

Here is a note from Kimberly Knorr:

"What started as an uncertainty turned out to be a certainty: champions will come to the rescue of other champions.

Wheelchairs 4 Kids is a charity that assists children who need new wheelchairs and adjustments to their homes or their parents' vehicles for accessibility. After one phone call, the Washington Nationals offered up the owner's suite and we had goody bags for all the children.

After assembling in the suite, a few players showed up to sign autographs and take pictures. This was their last weekend home game and things were winding down toward the beginning of the

season. But they still took the time out of their day to come and make some kids, who are fighting unimaginable odds, smile.

Just when we thought we had seen the last of the players and coaches, they just kept coming. Not only did they make the children's day, but they made the parents' day and the members of Wheelchairs 4 Kids. They sat and talked with the children. They spent time with them.

This was a remarkable experience and I thank everyone involved. The Nationals are champs on and off the field and these kids are champions every day of their lives. What stands out in my heart is hearing one player, when asked in the elevator up to the suite, 'Are you going up to make some children's day?' His response was 'No, they're going to make mine.'"

Randy Knorr took a moment earlier that day to ask the [players](#) if they might give a few minutes of their time. Knorr, who has known most of the Nationals for years having managed or coached them in the minor leagues or the majors, didn't expect the overwhelming response, but he was thrilled.

Here is a little more about Wheelchairs 4 Kids from their executive director, Madeline Robinson:

"Wheelchairs 4 Kids is dedicated to improving the lives of children with physical disabilities by providing wheelchairs, home and vehicle modifications as well as other assistive and therapeutic devices. We also have an inclusion program called "Wheely Fun Days" which involves getting our kids out of the house and participating in fun events just like other children. The Day with the Nats is a prime example.

"Many children in the United States faced with living with physical disabilities are in wheelchairs that are too small, in disrepair, or do not fit the needs of the child. Families are also often faced with trying to care for their special needs children in homes that have not been modified to meet their specific circumstances. Children outgrow their wheelchairs before government or insurance programs will allow for a replacement, and not only is it unsafe for a child to be in a chair that is inadequate for their needs, but it can impact their health in numerous ways including scoliosis, respiratory problems and pressure sores. Wheelchairs 4 Kids is working hard to address this much neglected need."

If you want to [learn more](#) about Wheelchairs 4 Kids, visit www.wheelchairs4kids.org.