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Local School Districts Get a Big Assist from Thomas Tull

The Tull Family Foundation's new Team UP initiative will give more than $2 million to support high school athletics in under-resourced schools

PITTSBURGH – November 21, 2025 – Thomas Tull, through the Tull Family Foundation, is giving a boost to high school sports via the new Team UP initiative, with an initial pilot program that gives nine Allegheny County school districts more than $2 million in grants to support high school athletics.

"Sports have played a significant role in my life," said Thomas Tull, co-founder with his wife Alba of the Tull Family Foundation. "I had coaches and teammates who have had a lasting impact on me, teaching the discipline of hard work, the structure of showing up prepared, and the rewards that come by learning to rely on one another. This grant focuses on providing high school athletic departments with the resources they need for their athletic programs, so that every boy and girl gets the chance to be part of a team. I believe that the combination of education, coupled with the opportunity to play a sport, is something that every student should have access to."

The Foundation announced the new program on Friday at Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy during an event that included student athletes, school district leaders, professional athletes, and elected officials, connecting to shine a light on the importance of youth sports.

The following school districts received Team UP grants based on the number of children in each district: Brentwood, $100,000; Clairton City, $100,000; East Allegheny, $250,000; McKeesport, $250,000; Penn Hills, $250,000; Pittsburgh Public Schools, $500,000; Sto-Rox, $100,000; West Mifflin, $250,000; and Woodland Hills, $250,000.

"This significant support from Thomas Tull and his foundation is an investment not only in our athletics programs, but in the health, leadership, and confidence of our students," said Pittsburgh Public Schools Superintendent Wayne N. Walters "Quality athletics

strengthen student outcomes. They boost attendance, build discipline, and reinforce the academic skills and habits that lead to lifelong success. We are profoundly grateful for this commitment to our children and our city."

The Team UP initiative gives the school districts wide latitude to use the grants as they see fit to increase funding for high school athletics, in any sport, for both girls and boys. The school districts were chosen using U.S. Census data to identify school districts with high numbers of underprivileged students.

"This contribution represents a significant investment in our students, providing them with enhanced opportunities to develop their skills, strengthen their character, and participate in safe, high-quality athletic experiences," said Sto-Rox Superintendent Sonya Coleman. "We extend our sincere gratitude to the Tull Family Foundation for their commitment to all of our students and our student-athletes and for recognizing the vital role athletics play in promoting teamwork, discipline, and school pride."

Among the speakers on Friday were Allegheny County Executive Sara Innamorato and Pittsburgh Mayor-Elect Corey O'Connor, currently the Allegheny County Controller.

"All students deserve access to the same opportunities to grow, connect, and discover what they are capable of, no matter their zip code or family income," said Innamorato. "This investment from the Tull Family Foundation expands what is possible for young people by supporting the schools that need it most and by ensuring that every student who wants to participate in sports has the chance to learn, compete, and be part of a team."

Said O'Connor, "This is another proud day to be a Pittsburgher, and I know the entire city is grateful for what the Tull Family Foundation has done for the children and families of the city schools."

Also speaking at the event on Friday were retired Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback and two-time Super Bowl champion Ben Roethlisberger and Hall of Fame running back Jerome Bettis, who, along with Roethlisberger, was a member of the team that won Super Bowl XL.

"Youth sports offer kids valuable life lessons, and I'm excited to show my support for this effort and its focus on giving kids opportunity," said Roethlisberger. "In my own experience, I had the opportunity to play football, basketball, and baseball, which taught me skills that transferred not in sports, but throughout my life. High school sports should be fun, and this pilot grant will give thousands of boys and girls in our community the chance to play."

Said Bettis, "Sports give kids the chance to dream bigger than their circumstances. I'm living proof of that. When we offer young athletes from underserved communities a hand up, not a handout, we give them the power to rewrite their story and reach for something greater."

Roethlisberger and Bettis were joined by their former teammates, retired Steelers quarterback and Homestead native Charlie Batch as well as James Harrison and 1970s Steelers legend Mel Blount. Also in attendance at the event were former Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Dave Bednar, a Pittsburgh-area native now playing for the New York Yankees; actor and Mt. Lebanon native Joe Manganiello, who played sports locally and whose film and TV credits include *Spider-Man, Magic Mike, True Blood* and *Nonnas.*

The Foundation will work with the school district to assess the impact of the grants over time.

ABOUT THE TULL FAMILY FOUNDATION
The Tull Family Foundation (TFF) was founded by Thomas and Alba Tull to support organizations that are devoted to transforming the lives of the people in underserved and underfunded communities. A private foundation, TFF funds the advancement of innovative ideas in education, sports, medical and scientific research, and conservation.

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