# Eisenhower Desert Orthopedic Center

## School Sports Program Benefits Local Athletes

*By: Sandra Lodan*

Eisenhower Desert Orthopedic Center physicians, physician assistants, acupuncturist and physical therapists "give back" through community services such as their School Sports Program.

**In keeping with its longstanding tradition** of community service, Eisenhower Desert Orthopedic Center (EDOC) is involved in numerous activities and programs that "pay it forward" to local residents. One program that helps many of the area's student athletes is EDOC's School Sports Program.

Since its inception 15 years ago, the program has provided comprehensive sports medicine services to several local schools, including Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Palm Desert and Palm Springs High Schools, Idyllwild Arts Academy and College of the Desert. EDOC physicians involved in the program donate their time to provide sideline medical expertise at all of the participating schools' home football games and follow-up care, or referrals for injured players as needed. They also administer pre-season physicals, give team trainers great access and response for medical issues that may arise during practice or off the playing field/court, and mentor student trainers. EDOC and the individual doctors also support many of the schools' fundraising efforts.

"This is an invaluable service and our gift to the desert community," Desert Orthopedic Center President and Chairman Stephen O'Connell, MD, notes. "These student athletes have access to fellowship-trained, multi-specialty orthopedic surgeons who are tops in their fields — a level of care typically only found at large medical institutions with university affiliations. I am very proud of the doctors and physicians assistants who give so generously of their time and talent to help these kids."

Currently, EDOC's School Sports Program is spearheaded by Matthew Diltz, MD and Patrick St. Pierre, MD, both orthopedic surgeons and sports medicine specialists. Dr. Diltz, a winner of Palm Springs Unified School District's Golden Apple Award in recognition of his commitment to community service, explains that care for student athletes often goes beyond sports medicine, which makes the program especially beneficial to students with little access to medical care or those who may have inadequate insurance

"I cannot praise the program and Dr. Diltz enough," comments Desert Hot Springs High School coach L.D. Matthews. "He is an integral part of our athletic training and valuable support to our team. He constantly goes above and beyond the call of duty, on his own time, to ensure the safety and well-being of our kids. Our kids love him," Matthews adds. "Dr. Diltz takes great pride in these kids. He does it out of the goodness of his heart."

Matt Haven, a former coach who now heads Xavier College Preparatory High School's Social Studies department, says, "EDOC has been a tremendous help in our efforts to build a comprehensive high school athletic program. From 'official' services like coordinating physicals for every athlete and making sure every football game is covered by an experienced doctor, to the 'unofficial' ways they help kids and families receive the care they need — particularly where barriers exist that would otherwise prevent that — EDOC has been invaluable."

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