'Hail Marys And Cranberries'

Holston Home's Turkey Bowl Football Game Is A Family Affair

Families across America gather on Thanksgiving to count their blessings, enjoy company and feast. Customary at many homes is playing football: Families grab their coats and step out with pigskin in hand to do their best Peyton Manning imitations.

The same thing happens at Holston United Methodist Home for Children, except that "Greeneville's Largest Family" hits the field on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving to accommodate those who may be traveling later.

Holston Home's annual Turkey Bowl flag football game has for 11 years has seen youth and staff lined up on opposite sides of the ball in a friendly yet competitive game on the field in front of Holston's main entrance.



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE SUN

During Tuesday's Turkey Bowl, Holston Home men staff defeated boy youth 52-50. Holston Home girls defeated female staff 24-13.

The gridiron was freshly lined, goalposts were raised and a lively crowd assembled to cheer on friends, a spokesman said Wednesday. The day's officiating crew was Gary Compton, Hick Hirschy, Jerry Thomas and Alan Dotson, four certified referees who have called a combined six high school state championship games.

Greene County Young Life's Jonathan Drinkwine provided play-by-play.

The Turkey Bowl has a

SEE **FOOTBALL**, PAGE 9A

FOOTBALL

FROM PAGE 1A



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE SUN

Holston United Methodist Home For Children staff members and youth played in the 11th annual Turkey Bowl Tuesday.

year's worth of bragging rights at stake, and this year was no different as the men's squad narrowly defeated the boy's team with a final score of 52-50, which takes the men's overall Turkey Bowl record to 11-0.

"Just like my own kids, we don't let them win anything," Bradley Williams, president of Holston Home, said with a smile. "They gotta earn it. This year they almost did."

There was a different kind of outcome though for the ladies, as the Holston Home girls beat the female staff 24-13.

The afternoon began with Jeremiah singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" and Drinkwine opening in prayer.

The boys came out strong when quarterback Evan connected with receiver Cade for a first down and then Nate ran in the first touchdown of the game.

"There's nothing like a good, old fashioned Turkey Bowl," exclaimed Drinkwine from the microphone.

But that score didn't last as men's quarterback Williams pitched to John Lucas for a short gain. On the next play, Williams hit Nick Cannon for the men's first touchdown. Abel Carrico then trotted to the field in a turkey costume to successfully kick the extra point which put the men ahead 7-6.

The entire game was an explosive back and forth offensive matchup. For the men's team, Williams, Lucas, Cannon, Carrico and Matt Decker had strong showings. On the boy's team, Cade, Evan, Brandon, Nate and Matt put on a show for the ages with their athleticism and studied plays. Cade scored two touchdowns on kickoff returns.

Williams enjoyed a stellar performance but threw an interception just before halftime on fourth and three to Brandon, who ran it straight to the house, giving the boys a two-point lead. But when the second half resumed, Williams redeemed himself with an interception of his own, which led to another men's touchdown.

With seconds to go in the fourth quarter, the boys' team mounted a comeback as Evan found Matt for a big touchdown as Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'" played on the sound system. This charged the boys and led to a successful two-point conversion, chipping at the men's lead. But in the end it was not enough for a boy's victory.

"To celebrate the win, men's team members popped Ibuprofen and soaked in Epsom salt baths," a news release about the game said.

The girl's game was fierce too. Emily, Sandra and Jessica all played dynamic football. Emily and Jessica each scored once, and Sandra scored twice, including a touchdown from an interception. Shaylee Tell scored the female staff team's only touchdowns, including one from an interception.

Though the competition was serious, there was a spirit of gratefulness amongst the players. At the end of the game, all players gave high fives and smiled for photos.

"We love our kids and cherish the moments to hit the pause button on the challenges of life," said Williams. "We can just be with our kids and enjoy them for the fun, resilient and incredible people they are."

"This Thanksgiving, rejoice, pray, express gratitude, and value family," Holston Home staff members said Wednesday. "Whether you're watching your favorite Christmas movie, taking a stroll, or playing football in the yard, praise God for His faithfulness, for there is no challenge that can remove us from the love of Jesus."