

Dixon, Lady Cat volleyball raise money to help kids in Peru



Katie Dixon had always wanted to give back, but she just needed to figure out a way.

Dixon, a Louisburg High School graduate and former volleyball player, was the LHS junior varsity volleyball coach this past season and recalled what it was like being a teenage girl herself.

“When I started coaching, I was working part time at the research institute up at KU Med,” Dixon said. “Mental health was a big topic there and I remember when I was in high school what it was like. High school is a weird age for girls and you are coming into your own and lacking confidence.

“I did a little bit of research of how becoming knowledgeable about other cultures, and looking at the world outside of your own, helps with someone’s own mental stability, especially with teens.”

As it turned out, Dixon had already planned a trip to Peru to visit her college friend, Rachel Loder, who serves in the Peace Corps. However, instead of making the trip all about seeing her friend, Dixon decided to help those in Peru and the girls in her hometown as well.

Dixon wanted to give her Lady Cat players a chance to feel

what it was like to help others in need, so this past fall she enlisted the Louisburg players to help her raise money to buy sports equipment to give to the children in Peru.

“I figured I could pair this up somehow and Rachel is just that kind of person that whatever she can help with, she will do,” Dixon said. “I just talked to her about what they needed. She said something related to sports would be perfect and it was just a great match. At the time, she was implementing an after-school sports program to get them acclimated to American sports and they didn’t have a lot of supplies.

“The girls got to meet Rachel over Skype and just the responses I got from the girls was great and it was all worth it.”



Katie Dixon poses for a group picture with students from the elementary school in Chuyabamba.

During the fall, the Lady Cat volleyball team put together a letter-writing campaign asking for funds to help with purchasing items – more specifically – volleyball equipment.

“Every player had to bring in at least five mailing addresses of different family members and friends,” Dixon said. “We spent about 10 minutes at the beginning of practice one day, just addressing envelopes and sent them off. People just

started mailing in funds and it was so nice. All the girls were really into it. Everyone was so excited getting all the donations. It was really cool.”

The girls raised enough money to buy 26 Tachikara balls, two indoor/outdoor nets, a ball pump and a couple ball bags to distribute between the two schools where Loder was located in the village of Chuyabamba.

Although Dixon was happy with the fundraising, getting the equipment over to Peru was a different story. It was going to cost too much to mail them so Dixon was forced to take them with her when she traveled to Peru in April, which meant carrying around a ball bag and nets to go along with all her luggage.

“I had to check them on three separate airlines,” she said. “To get there the cheapest, I went from Kansas City to Chicago, then to Miami and then to Lima. I had to recheck them at each lay over. I looked like an idiot. I had a saran wrap thing with the nets and I deflated all the balls to put them into one bag. People were laughing at me, for sure.

“When I got into Lima, I had to pull an all-nighter. I don’t speak Spanish at all and I am actually one of taller people there. So I am this tall person, who doesn’t speak Spanish, and has all this random stuff. I was trying to order something to eat and they were getting frustrated with me because my Spanish was horrible. It was pretty embarrassing, but definitely a learning experience.”

The trip to Peru got much better after that as she connected with Loder, and the two made their way to Chuyabamba, where they would present equipment to the high school and the elementary schools.

They started at the high school, where they donated the balls and one net to the physical education department and held a camp with the older girls.

At the elementary school, Dixon went into each classroom and gave them the balls separately. She was also able to connect with the students.

“A student from every class gave a speech,” Dixon said. “I had no idea what they were saying, but it was adorable. Some teachers gave speeches as well, and one even cried, which was really touching to me. It was a bigger deal than I was expecting it to be.”

Dixon even gave some Spanish a try as she gave little speeches to the groups and tried to communicate with them while putting on the camps.

“I told Rachel that I wanted to say something or at least give an effort at speaking the language,” Dixon said. “She should have intervened way more as it was embarrassing, especially at the high school. They were so kind though. We got the message across.”

“Rachel didn’t play volleyball and she tried to translate for me when we did the camps. It was a little nuts. But it was cool to make the connection. I wish I could have taken all the (Louisburg) girls with me, because I think it would have been a great experience for them.”