

MEDIA RELEASE

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Knox Metro Youth Football League joins USA Football Heads Up program

Knox County and the City of Knoxville's Knox Metro Youth Football League is adopting USA Football's Heads Up program, a national initiative to help make the sport of football better and safer for participants.

There are six key components to the Heads Up program: coach education and certification, concussion recognition and response, heads up tackling and blocking, prevention of sudden cardiac arrest, heat preparedness and hydration, and proper equipment fitting. These key components will be implemented league wide, which includes 22 commissions with more than 2,500 players and 500 coaches.

City and County Parks and Recreation administrators will host trainings and meetings with USA Football to implement, evaluate and monitor Heads Up Football player safety protocols. Player safety coaches will work with league commissioners, coaches, parents and players throughout the season to provide on-site clinics and mentoring to ensure that coaching and player safety best practices are used.

"We're excited to partner with USA Football to implement the Heads Up program in KMYFL. This is an opportunity for us to be part of a national movement to set a new standard in how youth football is played. It's a team effort between league and club commissioners, our coaches, parents and players to ensure player health and safety is at forefront of everything we do," said Jay Smelser, Knox County Deputy Director of Recreation.

"There's been prominent coverage of football-related head injuries in the national media lately, and it is important to take these steps with our partners to be proactive," said Aaron Browning, Knoxville Parks and Recreation Athletics Coordinator. "Learning the proper techniques at an early age will hopefully reinforce the importance of proper precautions in sports and life in general."

Members of the media are invited to stop by an official Heads Up Football player safety coach training on Saturday, July 11 from 12:30 to 4 p.m. at the Neyland-Thompson Sports Center on the University of Tennessee campus. This training session is full and **no new registrations are allowed**, so only those pre-registered through KMYFL can participate.

About USA Football: USA Football, the sport's national governing body, leads the game's development, inspires participation and ensures a better and safer experience for all youth, high school and other amateur players. The independent nonprofit is the official youth football development partner of the NFL, its 32 teams and the NFL Players Association. USA Football manages U.S. national teams within the sport for international competitions and provides more than \$1 million annually in equipment grants and youth league volunteer background check subsidies. Endowed by the NFL and NFLPA in 2002 through the NFL Youth Football Fund, USA Football (www.usafootball.com) is chaired by former NFL team executive Carl Peterson.

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