

# THE TIMES

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## K-ROB will try to resurrect Middle School sports in East Providence

By JON BAKER  
Sports writer

EAST PROVIDENCE -- Kevin Robinson, a multiple X Games' BMX medallist and perhaps the very definition of "Townie Pride," described his devastation when he heard that the city's Budget Commission had chosen to cut all middle school athletics beginning this fall.

He had just finished a BMX practice session at Camp Woodward, an action sports training facility near State College, Pa., last Friday when his wife, Robin, called his cell phone and explained what she had learned.

"I was shocked; I couldn't believe it," stated Robinson on Wednesday night, just hours after returning from a lengthy trip around the country. "Everything I – we – had worked so hard to help improve with the 'KROB Foundation' (a non-profit organization designed to provide financial aid to East Providence children who want to participate in sports but can't afford it) was being taken away.

"Robin told me, and then I got bombarded by messages on Facebook and Twitter from people back here," he continued. "I started crying, I was so upset. I thought of all the kids who join middle school sports, and their parents. This was the little ray of hope that they have to participate in something positive and fun, and it was being stripped away."

The good news is Robinson insisted his foundation – of which he acts as president and Robin the vice president – will raise funds to resurrect the athletic programs at Riverside and Martin middle schools. His plan is to install a booth at Rose Larisa Park, the finishing point of the second annual Ride with K-ROB/Family Fun Festival, on May 20.

"We're going to use that event as a day of awareness to the situation," he noted. "We'll have a separate booth set up for donations for that particular cause. I've invited as many celebrities as I could with hopes for drawing more people in and collect money not only for the middle school sports but also our foundation itself."

Those stars include Robinson's long-time friends Dr. David Chao, the head surgeon for the National Football League's San Diego Chargers and USA Rugby and X Games athletes; Rudy Paul, the famed contestant from the reality show "The Biggest Loser;" and Junior Seau, former linebacker for the New England Patriots.

There will be others from the X Games and BMX events, among them his best pal Chris Poulos, a multiple national and world BMX flatland champion.

Robinson indicated the annual budget for sports on the middle school level is about \$95,000, \$60,000 of which goes for coaches' salaries. It's of his volition to raise the remaining \$35,000 so those athletic events would resume this autumn without any hitches.

He cited plenty of reasons for his desire to help out. As a seventh grader at then-Martin Junior High in September 1983, he signed up for the cross-country team.

"I did because I loved to run, but I didn't last very long, maybe a month," he said with a chuckle. "I retired from cross-country because I wanted to ride my bike. That worked out for me, don't you think? It turned out to be a good choice. I later went out for track, but resigned from that, too. BMX was my life, even back then.

"But that's not the point," he added. "Middle school students are at their most vulnerable ages of their lives at that point. That's when they become the most susceptible to taking the wrong road, perhaps to the streets, instead of making the right choice, which is playing sports. There they learn how to work with others, learn self-discipline and self-esteem, and – most importantly – picking themselves up when they fall, no matter how many times they fall.

"We can sit around and point fingers, or blame whomever, but where is that going to get us? Or get the young kids who want to participate? The situation is what it is. Now we have to work together as Townies to resolve the issue.

"I know the receiver in charge of East Providence finances and the commission is trying to fix the monetary burdens of the city; however, I don't think they're looking at the repercussions of their choices. You take away athletics, which for a lot of the kids is their only positive outlet, and you take away their very beings.

"Do you realize what that could do to property values in E.P.? What family wants to move to a city where the schools are suffering and they don't even have sports to offer their children?"

Sports that will be sliced include football, cross-country, soccer, basketball, track and wrestling, among others.

In fact, his nephew, the son of sister-in-law Tracy Capobianco, wrestled at Silver Spring Elementary this past winter as a sixth grader. He thought he would gain the chance to represent Martin MS next season, but now won't – not without the help of his uncle's foundation.

"Our thoughts (those of Robinson and his organization's Board of Directors) are to hopefully get individuals to volunteer as coaches," he said. "If that happens, we're going to try to the best of our ability to get the \$35,000 or so to reinstate the sports."

The KROB Foundation, in the past, has aided those children who can't afford to register for youth sports such as Little League baseball, Pop Warner football, soccer, karate, cheerleading and wrestling. Just last year, the foundation offered money to Townie football players who needed new cleats to play.

And, for two years now, it paid the bill for youth football players to purchase airline tickets so they could trek to Orlando, Fla. for national championship tournaments.

"I refuse to stop addressing this problem," he stated. "I don't understand the word 'failure,' never have. It's not in my vocabulary. Fighters fight, and I'm a fighter."

Robinson said anyone interested in backing his plan to resurrect the middle sports programs in his native city should visit [www.krobfoundation.com](http://www.krobfoundation.com), or its Facebook or Twitter sites.

"People should keep checking our Web site, and we will pass on directions as to how to donate," he said. "We plan on accepting donations immediately."