

Donut Bowl Name Has Come Full Circle for Police, CROYA

By David A. F. Sweet

Committee Representing Our Young Adults (CROYA) hosted the annual flag football Donut Bowl game with the Lake Forest Police this fall. CROYA Manager Todd Nahigian talked about the origins of the game, the initial reaction to the name of the event and more in the second of our two-part series on the Lake Forest organization that serves teenagers.

How did the Donut Bowl begin?

Back in the early 1990s, youth and officers decided to play beach volleyball to get to know each other in a fun way. The adult officers were athletic and strong -- they not only won the volleyball match, but they spiked the ball at the kids many times, defeating the whole purpose of building positive connections between the groups.



Todd Nahigian (left) and former Lake Forest High School Resource Officer Bob Zacher get together at Donut Bowl XXV in 2023.

After I was hired in 1995, the first Lake Forest High School Resource Officer Bob Zacher and I met to talk about how we could bring the two groups together for a positive event. That November, CROYA held a Topic Night dinner meeting for youth and officers to come together and have meaningful discussion. I only remember positive things from that first event, and soon after, everyone's wheels were spinning to come up with a creative way to bring these groups together in the future. We asked the youth at the time what they thought would be fun, and immediately they suggested flag football. On Oct. 20, 1996, we had an amazing turnout for football, pizza, and discussion.

What was the reaction to the Donut Bowl name?

When the name was eventually suggested by the youth, it was not received with a positive response by the leadership of the Police Department. They worried it was making fun of them, rather than bringing the two groups together in a positive way. Bob and I convinced those who were concerned, what better way to market the event, which was created to break down stereotypes! The story of why police officers frequented donut shops is often shared and provokes some fun conversation. Back in the day, when most businesses and restaurants closed in the evening, the only places that were open for officers on the midnight shift were coffee houses, which as we all know, are famous for donuts! You should see the looks on the youths' faces when they hear that businesses and restaurants didn't stay open late into the evening many years ago. They seem to have an "aha" moment when the connection between officers and donuts is explained.

Has the Donut Bowl spawned any offshoots?

When middle school students found out about the Donut Bowl event, they wanted to have an event that brought them together with the Police as well. Youth suggested we play floor hockey with the officers and call it the Donut Cup! Just this year, we celebrated the 20th Annual Donut Cup, and amazingly, we haven't missed a year playing floor hockey, even during Covid. We held the event only days before the lockdown in 2020, and then in 2021 we held the event outdoors at Deer Path Middle School.

Read the first part of our two-part series on CROYA [here](#).