

Arizona Cardinal Bertrand Berry Gives Back

Written by Hilary Gainey

Big in body and spirit, Arizona Cardinal Bertrand Berry tackles cancer and childhood poverty with unrelenting fervor. With the support of his fellow teammates and wife Shellie, Berry gives kids a new play on life.



Despite the red and white of his Arizona Cardinal's uniform, NFL defensive end Bertrand "B-Train" Berry is not the typical picture of Santa Claus. However, to many abused, ill and underprivileged children around the Valley, that's exactly who he is.

Founded in 2005, the Bertrand Berry Foundation is dedicated to giving children a better life experience by raising donations and offering support to Childhelp USA, The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and The Boys and Girls Club of Central Arizona. As one of the foundation's yearly events, slated this year for Dec. 7, Berry and his teammates ride aboard the B-Train's Holiday Express with 50 children from Childhelp USA. Along with a free t-shirt and a \$100 gift card to spend however they like at Target, the children are given what most of them have lacked during their young lives: care and attention from adults. "I love interacting with the kids the most, and the fact that they are so generous with the gifts that they're given really touches me," Berry says.

Born and raised in Humble, Tex., at a young age Berry was exposed to a fellow classmate's struggle with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. Along with the other students, he made a banner and raised money for the 12-year-old girl named Shellie. Unbeknownst to him at the time, Shellie was to become Berry's wife and partner in his charitable works. As a survivor of childhood cancer, Shellie knows all too well how important a role her peers' support and encouragement played. The two, married in 1999, work together to educate, support and raise funds for local children's charities through the foundation's efforts and events. "The main goal is to help those who truly need it," Berry says. "Everyone needs a little help along the way, so I just try to do my part."

In addition to the B-Train's Holiday Express, the organization hosts other events throughout the year to keep children's well-being in the hearts and minds of Arizonans. One such event is the Bertrand Berry Celebrity Weekend. Held in late March, the weekend begins with a soiree featuring a live and silent auction, musical entertainment, dancing and, of course, celebrities. Berry and his teammates then teach a football camp where 120 lucky kids from local chapters of the Boys and Girls Club learn how to punt and pass like pros. The weekend reaches its finale with B-Train's Bash—celebrities and Valley residents alike gather to dance the night away with proceeds benefitting Berry's foundation. Not only does the celebrity blowout cater to underprivileged children, it also brings in about \$100,000 dollars for the Bertrand Berry Foundation.

Although the foundation is named after Berry, his teammates are an integral part of the organization. "They really don't get enough thanks for the things they do behind the scenes...one teammate bought a girl a computer with his own money and kept up with her long after the [Holiday Express] event," Berry says. In an age where celebrity scandal tends to reign supreme, it's refreshing that Berry brings a positive influence to the youth of Arizona. He teaches us that the spirit of giving is not confined to the holiday season but is instead a year-round endeavor.

To learn more about The Bertrand Berry Foundation visit www.btrain92.org and www.bertrandberryfoundation.org.