

Charity club turns homers into cash

By JAMES NICAS
Staff writer

MILWAUKEE — When Mark McGwire was traded to the St. Louis Cardinals last year, Cardinals fans wanted to make sure he felt welcome in St. Louis.

After thinking for a few days, a small group of fans came up with an idea to show him he was wanted.

Their creation of the Mac Attack Pack has now turned into one of the best fan charity organizations in the major leagues.

"We were in the early stages of forming our organization to try to get McGwire to stay in St. Louis when he signed," said Ron Wallace, one of the founding members of the Mac Attack Pack. "There were eight of us who decided to keep it going and give money to charity."

When McGwire signed in 1997, he gave \$1 million to help abused children in the St. Louis area. McGwire's generosity led the group to give money to Cardinals Care, a charity whose funds will stay in St. Louis to help abused children.

"After he gave the money to charity, it gave us an idea to also help Cardinals Care," said Marty Prather, commander in chief of the Mac Attack Pack. "We now sit in left field at Busch Stadium, and we can be seen by our red hard hats."

The red hard hats were also in attendance last weekend in Milwaukee. Around 25 members of the Mac Attack Pack made the 400-mile trip from St. Louis to support McGwire on his journey to setting the home run record.

"We have gone on three road trips this year, and we are going to go on more next year," Prather said. "Milwaukee has been great to us, and we enjoy going on the road."

The Mac Attack Pack currently has almost 500 members nationwide. Each member donates a \$25 membership fee as well as donating \$20 to Cardinals Care. While attending a game, each member also donates a "Buck a Base" for each base McGwire reaches.

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RON WALLACE
Mac Attack Pack founding member

"If McGwire homers, and there are 300 people there, that is \$1,200 to Cardinals Care," Wallace said. "We generate a lot of money, and it makes us feel good that we are giving to a good cause."

This season's efforts will be recognized at a pre-game ceremony on Wednesday at Busch Stadium when the Mac Attack Pack will present its donation to Cardinals Care. Prather said it will be a great thrill for the club when they give their money.

"We have heard that McGwire likes our organization, and he thinks this is first class," Prather said. "This year we raised over \$10,000, and we expect to raise over \$20,000 next year."

In 1998, one of the most memorable years in baseball history, the Mac Attack Pack also has been able to see some of the most memorable home runs in baseball history.

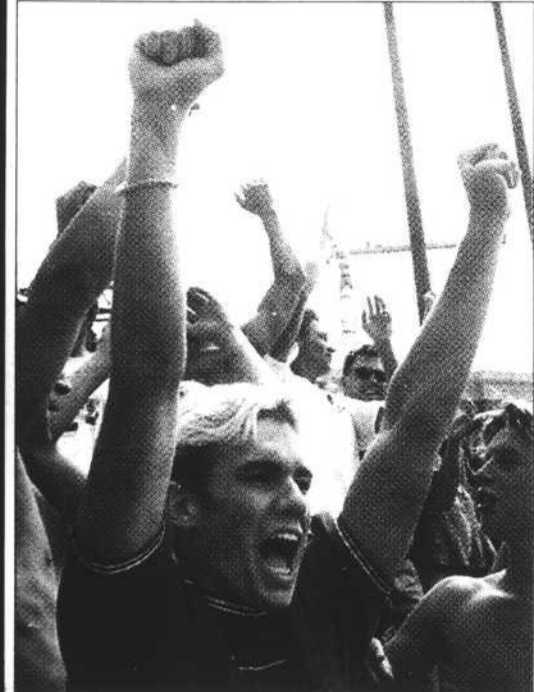
"No. 62 was great because we were there as an entire group," Prather said. "The stadium was electric, and the town was on fire."

With all the attention McGwire has received this year, the Mac Attack Pack has not met the slugger they traveled to see. However, Prather said that was not the reason why they formed their organization.

"With all the media attention, it is only common courtesy to wait until after the season, but that is not why we formed our group," Prather said. "It has been great that we have been able to raise money for a good cause."

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ARE CHANGING THE FACE



OF BASEBALL

PHOTOS BY MATT MILLER/DN

(clockwise from top left)
CHARTER MEMBERS OF THE MAC ATTACK PACK hold up large numbers signifying the home run tally. The group raised more than \$10,000 this season for abused children in the St. Louis area by donating \$1 per person for every base McGwire reaches. For example, if there were 100 members at the game, and McGwire hit a homer and a double, \$600 would be donated to charity for that game.

MARK MCGWIRE watches a ball he hit that cleared the upper-deck facade in County Stadium against the Milwaukee Brewers on Friday night. The ball curved foul by a few feet, leaving no mark in the record book — just in players' and fans' memories.

WISCONSIN NATIVE CHAD LEATHERMAN, 18, screams after Mark McGwire hit his 65th home run of the season Sunday afternoon. The Cardinals-Brewers three-game series drew 155,000 fans.

TREVOR HOBART DROVE more than 300 miles to see McGwire hit another dinger Saturday. Hobart was one of many fans in the stadium wearing Cardinal red.