

The Sound of Football | CEHS

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USU football players and the families of Sound Beginnings students were an inspiration to each other as they recently came together to enjoy a barbecue and play football.

The Sound Beginnings program in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services at Utah State University is an early education program that provides services to children with hearing loss. This is the 9th annual Sound Beginnings football party since the tradition started in 2010.

"These kids have great personalities and they're really funny," said USU football player Chance Lovato, a freshman from San Diego, CA. "It's a pretty awesome opportunity to play together."

"It's great to see that these guys are willing to come up and throw the football and play with our kids," said Tawn Allen, mother of a 3-year-old in the program. "This is their own personal time, and they're not required to come. It's amazing."

Family centered events such as these can build lasting relationships, as parents, siblings, and students get to know each other and offer support. It's also a great opportunity for siblings of children with hearing loss can have fun and enjoy themselves. "They don't have to be quiet or be on the sidelines," said Martin. "The siblings can go out and have fun with the football players."

"It feels like we're making a difference in the community," said USU football player Tate Shumway, a freshman from Mesa, AZ. "It's nice to make people's day, and it feels like we're doing that."

Nicole Martin, director of the Sound Beginnings program, said, "To have that personal connection with athletes and to see so much delight in the experience is wonderful. It's a lighthearted night where families can let go of their worries and have fun."

Martin explained how activities like this can strengthen families' bonds with each other and also give program administrators insight into their needs. "It's also great for

the grad students to become involved with the families on a personal level," she said. "When you get to know families personally, you can serve them in a much more tailored way."

Sound Beginnings provides many experiences on the USU campus, such as Ag Week, when the children learn about tractors and animals and get excited about agriculture. "As a program, we are always looking for opportunities to point their sights ahead to what their opportunities could be," said Martin. "It's good to form partnerships with different organizations on campus, and especially student athletes, who are fun and motivating for everyone."