

# The 10th Annual “Increase the Peace. Stop the Violence” Blacktop Classic

By Jeff Harper | Photos by Darrel Wheeler

Athletic Initiative presented The 10th Annual “Increase the Peace. Stop the Violence” Blacktop Classic, which happened on Sunday, September 8th at Lincoln High School. The event again brought kids from all over the county to bring awareness to bullying, gang violence, being positive, and motivating themselves to work hard in life.

There were many guest speakers who came to talk to the young players. This year the guest list included the 2019 NBA Toronto Raptor champion Norman Powell, who is also a Lincoln High School and UCLA alumni. Norman spoke on what is his brand, “Understand the Grind,” is about: His dedication to his academics, his hard work on the court and his giving back. Other guest speakers included CA State Assembly Member, Dr. Shirley Nash Weber, Delsean Lynch, Amir Alliance from Walk Away No Drama Today, Myeisha Ligans, Nomi Heart Foundation who talked about bullying and raising an autistic daughter, and PMan who used comedy to tell his tough story in how he made it.

Also, there were some great awards given out. Norman gave out his Norman Powell Understand the Grind Award to some great young people. His award is for kids who grind in the classroom, their sport and their community. The award winners were: Reggie Everett, Lincoln High; Imani James, Lincoln High; Grant Gayhart, Saint Augustine; Matthew Williamson, Valhalla High School; Deeshon Swafford, Cathedral High; and Chris Curtis, Lincoln High.

The Markel Byrd Inspirational Award was given to three young people. Markel Byrd grew up in Southeast and attended Horizon and played three sports. His inspiration around people was true and real. Markel died in 2015 in a car accident coming home from college where he played football. This award was given to kids who have Markel’s quality and inspirational character. Winners were: Curon Brown Dunn, Lincoln High; Keithshawn Smith, Lincoln High; and Jeffrey Paul Harris from Steel Canyon. Jeffrey sent in his own self-written quote. This is what he sent in: “This is a quote I made myself. ‘A man can grind, a man can sweat, a man can cry, but if a man has the guts to stand up for another man who is struggling and grind with them,

that’s when a real grind happens.”

The last award of the day went to three great community members who have impacted the community. It was Mr. Bass, Mr. Miner and Coach Earl. So, the award is called the Community Lifetime Contributor Award

Every player in the event had to sign the anti-bullying pledge and the Ball Sober 365 pledge. The basketball games were just for fun, but exciting. The community played against SDPD and, again, the game came down to the wire. The second game was coached from the San Diego County Coaches Association against Team Powell, which was made up of alumni from the past Increase the Peace events. Those members are now in college. It came down to the young guys winning by 4. The rest of the day, all ages played against each other and had fun.

Some great special guests stopped by, including City Councilmember Monica Montgomery, Michael Brunker, Lincoln High School new administrator, Tyree Robinson (Lincoln alum/NFL), Coach Travis from Mesa College, San Diego Guardians owners, players and coaches (ABA Basketball) and Gary Holliman with Fanview.

At the end of the day, the goal was to continue to do our part and take a stand on bullying and gang violence. Athletes and Coaches to go back on their campus and communities and take a stand. For the coaches at Lincoln Jeff Harper Harris, Deadrick Robinson, Dan Falconer, Louie Velez, Dr Edgar Hodge and Delsean Lynch “It’s Bigger Than Basketball.”

One of the best parts of the day was seeing many former players who have played in the event over the years; former San Diego Cougars players, former Lincoln players, former Morse players coaches like Mike Haupt from Saint Augustine, and coach Ryam Mier from La Jolla Country Day.

I appreciate the people who came to support the event. It’s the 10th one and I know no matter how many show up we touched some lives on Sunday.



## Battle high summer bills with Level Pay.

The season of high energy bills is upon us. You can avoid a spike in your monthly bills by signing up for our Level Pay Plan, available to anyone. By averaging your energy bills over the year, you’ll pay about the same every month based on your estimated usage. Level Pay evens out the highs and lows so you know what to expect and can budget more easily. It’s one summer drama you can do without.

Sign up for Level Pay today at [sdge.com/summer](http://sdge.com/summer).

