



Miller supports cause close to his heart

Posted Apr 5, 2013

By Matt Florjancic, Staff Writer

CLEVELAND -- Browns offensive lineman Ryan Miller visited the Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center on Thursday afternoon.

CLEVELAND -- After growing up with hearing issues and learning how to utilize American Sign Language in college, Cleveland Browns offensive lineman **Ryan Miller** has tried to set an example to those who go through the same battles he fought as a child.

Following the conclusion of the team's offseason workouts on Thursday, Miller visited the Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center where he took a tour of the facility, including a look inside the 50,000-pound hearing booths that are soundproof and suspended seven feet above an open pit, visited kids and adults on site and had the opportunity to sign with them.

"It was a lot of fun," Miller said. "I got to meet with a few kids and see what they're doing, and actually speak and sign with a few kids. That was really cool.

"I'd like to put my foot forward and say something about (hearing loss). I think a lot of people get swept under the rug because they don't have a voice, and I want to try and be that and help prevent that."

Michelle Burnett, director of clinical services at the Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center served as Miller's guide on the trip and talked to him about the various programs the center offers to the Cleveland community.

Burnett oversees audiology and speech pathology at the center. In addition to dispensing hearing aids, the center works with children who have trouble developing speech skills, and run the regional infant hearing program for children three years old and younger. Those children who fail the newborn screening test get referred for a full hearing test, and then, the speech pathologists work with them.

The center also helps parents learn how to communicate with children, provides sign-language interpreters to doctors offices, courts, schools, major events, and hospitals, and is working with the Domestic Violence and Child Advocacy Center and Cleveland Police Department on a domestic violence grant, which will be used to help educate police officers in sign language to better communicate with victims of domestic abuse.

"Having somebody who's aware of hearing loss and the impact it has on daily living to be able to support us and support our mission in terms of getting the word out to people is invaluable," Burnett said. "We don't have a big marketing budget; we can't advertise. When you really learn about it, you start to see how pervasive it is. Communication skills are the No. 1 predictor of academic success. They're the No. 1 skill that's valued in employment settings. Everybody wants a person who's a good communicator. It's great for us to have Ryan's interest and be able to put a spotlight on that.

"He's living proof of what we want our families that we serve to know and think about. It's devastating when you're a



parent and learn your child can't hear. We've seen all kinds of reactions, and parents don't know what to do. They've suddenly lost their vision of what this little baby was going to grow up and be able to do. Ryan and people like Ryan are just so important to letting those parents know you don't have to change those expectations for your child. You can dream and you can help him or her achieve their dreams."

By making visits to those in Cleveland's deaf community, Miller is hoping to be an example that with determination and hard work, anything is possible.

"With a little faith, you can go a long way," Miller said. "I've been blessed with a support system, and role models that you can look up to and say, 'We're kind of similar. If he can do that, I can do that.'"

URL: <http://www.clevelandbrowns.com/news/article-1/Miller-supports-cause-close-to-his-heart/fedb1816-2de4-4327-a295-c7218f8650a3>

© 2013 Cleveland Browns. All rights reserved