

News Gazette Article
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URBANA – The two competitors face each other and lean forward, ready to square off.

The judges standing behind them keep score.

Advertisement

The game begins: Rock. Paper. Scissors. Shoot!

The winner of the round pumps his fist in the air. The crowd cheers.

And you thought it was just a playground game.

Nearly 400 University of Illinois students participated in a Rock Paper Scissors tournament Sunday evening. UI junior Scott Wolf organized the tournament to raise money for the youth scholarship funds of the Champaign and Urbana park districts, which provide money for financially needy children to participate in park district programs. He formed a student organization, Illini Summer Opportunity Organization, last spring to raise money for that purpose.

Wolf worked as a counselor and director of sports camps in his hometown of Deerfield and saw the benefits for the children who participated.

"You can see the change in their lives. (They) develop social skills, confidence. They have fun," Wolf said.

In addition to the tournament, fraternity members from Sigma Alpha Mu and Phi Kappa Psi camped out on the Quad for a week, selling raffle tickets for a trip to Acapulco and a TV, among other prizes. Phi Kappa Psi members sold raffle tickets to tailgaters before Saturday's UI football game. The participants in the Rock Paper Scissors tournament paid \$10 each to participate.

Wolf said he solicited donations from UI graduates as well. One has pledged to match what the student organization raises, up to \$15,000. Wolf expects the final amount raised to be at least \$20,000 and probably closer to \$25,000. The money will be split evenly between the Champaign and Urbana park districts, he said.

"It's absolutely great they are already thinking about giving back to the community," said Bobbie Herakovich, executive director of the Champaign Park District, of the college students.

"It's a year that we really need it," she added.

The Taste of Champaign brings in most of the money for scholarships given to financially needy families to help their children participate in park district programs, including summer camps. But

the Taste closed early on the Saturday of the event this year because of rain, meaning it didn't bring in as much money as usual.

Herakovich said the Champaign Park District gives about \$25,000 in scholarships to 250 to 300 families each year.

Urbana gives between \$20,000 and \$25,000 each year for 80 to 120 children, said Dan Gible, superintendent of recreation for the Urbana Park District. He said most scholarships are for summer camps, swim lessons and sports camps.

Gible said he's happy to see more UI students volunteering and becoming involved in the community.

Wolf said he organized a Rock Paper Scissors tournament for some of the kids at one of his camps and it was a big hit. If it works with 8-year-olds, maybe it will work with college students, he thought.

Plus, he wanted something quick, easy and inexpensive that everyone could do.

That's what UI freshman Megan Heinlen liked about it.

"You don't have to be athletic. You can just come out for a good cause and have fun," said Heinlen, who won her bracket to make it to the first championship round before being defeated.

So did she have a strategy? Is it possible to have a strategy in Rock Paper Scissors?

"You have to think what the other person's thinking. Get in their head," she said.

How do you do that?

"I don't know. Just do what you feel," Heinlen said.

Senior Rich Pasquesi said he beat Mike McDonough after he noticed McDonough, a UI junior, kept shooting Rock.

But Pasquesi admits it's mostly completely random.

Senior Jamal Gorham said he doesn't know any strategy – "It's fun because there's almost no skill involved." – but he plays Rock Paper Scissors whenever he and someone else have to decide something important. Like who gets to ride shotgun in the car, or who has to do the dishes.

"Those are the games that really count," Gorham said. "This one's just for fun."