Pryde & Pinstripes Bring HOPE to Kids

By Christian Red

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Keith Pryde said the idea came to him late one evening in 2008 while returning home from work, when he was still grappling with how to process the grief over his slain sister Julia, one of the victims of the Virginia Tech shootings a year earlier.

Pryde read about the Tuesday's Children nonprofit organization. Created in the aftermath of 9/11, it supports families affected by the terrorist attacks, including the hundreds of children who lost fathers or mothers. Pryde soon contacted the group to volunteer, and was selected to be a mentor to then 6-year-old Robert Spencer, whose father Robert Andrew was killed on 9/11 in the North Tower while working as a broker for Cantor Fitzgerald.

"I thought that this would be one of the perfect ways to grieve for my loss, and it's been a blessing ever since," Pryde said yesterday, after he was honored as Mentor of the Year by Tuesday's Children at the Beekman Beach Club in lower Manhattan. "Robert is a great part of my life."

Pryde and Spencer, 10, are loyal Yankees fans, which made the ceremony all the more meaningful when Mariano Rivera, Curtis Granderson, Cory Wade, Steve Garrison, Luis Ayala and former Yankee skipper Joe Torre all made a surprise appearance—part of the Yankee's HOPE (Helping Others Persevere and Excel) Week. Numerous other families attached to Tuesday's Children were also on hand to enjoy food, snag autographs and then take a river

shuttle to Yankee Stadium for the game against Seattle.

“I’ll be the driver, the captain,” Rivera said of the boat ride, drawing laughs. “I can close this. Believe me.”

Perhaps no player and baseball executive can understand the gravity of the 9/11 attacks more than the All-Star closer and his former manager. Torre said he recently did a feature with former Mets manager Bobby Valentine and former Jets coach Herm Edwards in connection with the upcoming 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

“You didn’t realize what place you had as a baseball person,” said Torre, now Major League Baseball’s executive VP of baseball operations. “It changed us forever. It seems like it was 100 years ago, and yet it seems like it was 10 minutes ago. It’s something that gets me choked up when I think of the youth today, because they’re not going to have the freedoms that we had growing up.”

While Rivera said that it would be important to reflect upon the anniversary as the date draws closer, “We’re here to move forward.”

“When the time comes, we want to remember it, but with different feelings,” added Rivera, who was with the Yankees when they played against Virginia Tech’s baseball team in 2008, a year after the shootings. “We’re trying to bring hope to those who lost their families.”