

Football a Big Success In Small Alaska City



Imagine going to a high school football game where it is so cold you have to wear a parka in August and you have to worry about polar bears getting on the field.

The weather and wild animals are just two of the challenges faced by students on the Barrow, Alaska, high school football team. Three years ago, the school did not have a team. This year, the team -- which is called the Whalers -- was in the first state finals game to be played above the Arctic Circle. And they won the game.

Barrow is a small city with a population of about 4,500 people. It is the northernmost city in the United States. Even though it is a small city, Barrow has many of the same problems big cities have. For example, many students in the city's high school were struggling. Some were dropping out of school. School leaders wanted to keep students in school, so they decided to start a football team.

NEWS WORD BOX

parka challenges
struggling gravel
artificial northernmost

Most of the students who tried out for the team had never played football before. The school's computer teacher, Mark Voss, used to be a football coach in Arkansas. He taught them how to play. Since Barrow has no roads out of town and the closest school is 500 miles away, the team must fly to games. When they play on their home field, they must have people on the field who use gunshots to scare away polar bears.

The Whalers played their first games on a gravel field with yard lines marked by flour. But birds kept eating the flour. Last year a woman in Florida saw a TV show about the Whalers and decided to help. She raised more than \$500,000 so the team could have a field made of artificial turf and the money they needed to travel to other schools.

MORE FACTS ABOUT FOOTBALL IN BARROW

- Students' grades and attendance have improved since football was introduced.
- The wind chill temperature in Barrow can drop to 110 degrees below zero.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

A lot of people came together to bring football to Barrow. What examples can you think of that show how people can accomplish a big task by working together?