



### **Trading Pizza for Personal Growth – Mikayla McSweeney**

I attended the Julie Foudy Sports Leadership Academy, last summer at St. Mary's College, and while I was there they asked me what I would do if I received \$250 from Julie Foudy. I said, "I would use it on children that had some sort of a disability and I would do something fun and memorable with them." And little did I know that I was going to receive that money in the mail later that year. With the money that I received from Julie I had the opportunity to visit a class of children between ages 3 to 5 that were Autistic. I organized with the teacher what would be appropriate and have staying power with the kids and she recommended lunch and educational toys. With that idea I provided a pizza party on Valentines Day which was a blast. The children enjoyed their treats and I really got know them. They received hands-on toys which are great learning tools for them; they also received soccer balls, which we later played with at recess!

I would like to thank Julie Foudy for all of the opportunities she has given me. When I walked into the class room I thought it would be just some project I had to do, and I knew I would have fun with it. But I didn't realize that I would learn so much about autistic children, but also learned new things about myself and how I connect with children. I really feel like this is something every young girl should try once in their life. You really learn the true meaning of leadership.

**"CHOOSE TO MATTER!"**

**-Mikayla McSweeney**