



BROKERS BATTLE TO RAISE BUCKS FOR BATTERED KIDS

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The Olympics are over, but local commercial real estate brokers are ready for their own competition.

We're not talking about bringing home the gold for office leasing and industrial sales or landing the latest big-box retailer next to Park Meadows. Next month more than 200 brokers will compete in events such as Ultimate Frisbee and team obstacle courses.

It's all part of a fund-raiser called Brokers for Battered Kids at the Inverness Softball / Athletic Field on Sept. 21 with plans to raise \$200,000 or more for disadvantaged kids.

Now in its fifth year, the Denver Nuggets Community Fund matches 50CENTS for every \$1 raised.

Steve Leonard, president of Pacifica Holding Co., one of the savviest investors in the metro area, brought the idea to the Denver area from California.

In addition to Pacifica, founding sponsors are Northland Financial Co. and Land Title Guarantee Co. The Denver Active 20-30 group picks the charities, which range from the Colorado Christian Homes to the Open Door Youth Gang Alternatives. One hundred percent of every dollar raised goes to the charities, Leonard said.

The first year, the competition was held in Leonard's back yard, but it quickly grew too big. "Our first-year goal was to raise \$5,000, and we raised something like \$22,000," Leonard said. "In California, a group of brokers were doing this, but it wasn't exactly the same thing. It wasn't called 'Brokers For Battered Kids,' but they were gathering to play sports to raise money for charity. It wasn't as focused as this is."

Brokers will compete in 26 teams. In addition to the big brokerage houses, such as CB Commercial, Frederick Ross and Grubb & Ellis, groups such as the National Network of Commercial Real Estate Women, the Building Owners and Managers Association, and the Denver Metropolitan Commercial Area Realtors will participate.

Ultimate Frisbee is like rugby with a Frisbee - but no tackling is allowed, Leonard said. The finale is a gurney race, where teams push a "patient" on a hospital bed through an obstacle course.

For the more traditional athletes, there's volleyball, soccer, and badminton. For the kids, there's a Fun Zone carnival.

Brokers tend to be Type-A, competitive personalities and they play to win, said Brad Neiman, a broker with CB Commercial.

"We're the right people, in the right place, at the right time," Neiman said. "But really, the athletics are their own reward. It's a really an enjoyable day. We all have our favorite charities, but this really has become the event where everyone in commercial real estate gives something back to the community."

In fact, there's probably more competition and pride taken in raising more money than their peers, than whipping them in a game of badminton.

It is the kids who are the big winners, Leonard said.

"We give awards to the teams that raise the most money. The idea is not to pick teams because of the athleticism of the brokers. The money for the kids is the big thing."