

# Kids connect to Black Panther because of characters just like them

By Chiquita Vaughn

9 News

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It's not every day you hear about a whole theater being rented out for a "movie" night for about 100 kids and their families. The movie the Cole Boys & Girls Club made the focus ended up being just as important as the outing.

Steven Roland, the site director at Cole Boys & Girls Club Arts & Sciences Academy, believes Black Panther has a strong connection to his students.

Months ago, Roland and his staff began planning a family movie night.

"There was one movie that stood out to us, and it was Black Panther because it was going to empower our young people and their families," Roland says.

Black Panther follows the people of Wakanda, a technologically advanced African country that keeps its assets a secret from the rest of the world. The lead character, T'Challa, is challenged with securing his people's way of life.

"Empowerment through Black Panther means seeing a film with people that look like them - people that are doing the right thing," he says.

Most of the students at Cole are minorities – mainly African American and Latino.

"The world and society are not showing them the good things that people of color are doing," he says.

The Cole Boys & Girls Club operates in northeast Denver, primarily serving youth and families from Cole, Five Points and Whittier.

"The film showed rough communities and that's the kind of communities our kids come from," says Roland. "We have to show them from movies and from us going into the Boys & Girls Club every day that they can overcome and make it from circumstances that a lot of people might not make it out of."

Instilling that message in the students at Cole was a success.

9NEWS caught up with them just as the movie credits stopped. Kids of various ages and grade-levels were satisfied with more than just the action in the film. Black Panther is unique compared to previous hero films.

"I give it 100 percent," says 9-year-old Kearre Watson.

Serenity Higgins, 12, says "it's different because Black Panther comes from a whole different type of world. The culture was really cool because it showed our ancestors and that was really cool."

Aside from empowering minority youth through cultural representations, the movie's characters are fan favorites for other reasons.

Serenity's favorite character is Black Panther's sister, Shuri, a technological genius with a witty nature.

The seventh grader says her interest in technology makes her like Shuri in many ways.

Serenity was grateful that Steven Roland, who she calls Mr. Steven, planned the outing and made Zach Kerr from the Denver Broncos part of it.

While pondering on his youth, Kerr remembers wearing Black Panther shirts from the comic book and activist group in high school. Upon learning about the movie, he was excited to see it with kids in the community.

"I think it's important for kids to see someone who looks like them doing something positive – not only for the community but for the world," says Kerr.

Although the movie focuses on a specific group of people, he says it promotes togetherness.

The defensive lineman says he wanted to let students know that someone cares about them from the Broncos.

"At 10, 11, or 12 - if I had a player from the NFL come watch a movie with me I would feel special," he says.

Roland and his staff are already brainstorming ways to utilize the messages in the movie as teaching lessons. He plans on taking students to see more movies that spark conversation.

# Denver Bronco Battles Complex Disease For Mom And Others

By Kathy Walsh

9 News

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A Denver Bronco is determined to help thousands battling a disease you don't often hear about. Sarcoidosis is an inflammatory disease that usually affects the lungs. Anyone can get it.

For Broncos defensive lineman Zach Kerr, finding a cure is personal.

"I'm trying to be the best Zach I can be everyday," Kerr told CBS4 Health Specialist Kathy Walsh.

For the Bronco that means doing damage on defense. He's a force on the football field.

"I find something that makes me angry about the person across from me and then I just kind of try to let it all out," Kerr explained.

Not so at home. With wife, Iris, and 8-month-old Enzo, Kerr is a devoted husband and dad.

"He's our little ball of joy for the whole entire family," said Kerr.

That includes Kerr's mother, Tinya, also known as Noni.

"I am the biggest momma's boy in the world," said the 334-pound football player.

So it's been especially hard for Kerr to watch his mother battle what's called sarcoidosis, an inflammatory disease where immune system cells clump together in an organ.

"Hers is attacking her lungs, her respiratory system. One day it's okay. The next day she's inflamed and needs to be on a breathing machine," said Kerr.

He said he worries about her all the time.

But Kerr has turned anxiety into action. He is the national spokesperson for the Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research. The rate of the disease is higher among African-Americans. Kerr wants to promote awareness.

Kerr wants people fighting to find a cure.

# Broncos defensive lineman Zach Kerr fights back against sarcoidosis

By Kim Constantinesco

Fansided

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Denver Broncos defensive lineman Zach Kerr is all about disrupting offenses in the NFL, but when he's not on the field, he's rattling something far greater: Sarcoidosis, an inflammatory condition that often affects the lungs and lymph nodes.

Why stand up to the disease that causes inflammatory cells to clump and interfere with an organ's structure and function? The 27-year-old's mother, Tinya, has the condition.

"Hers is attacking her lungs, her respiratory system. One day it's okay. The next day she's inflamed and needs to be on a breathing machine," Kerr told CBS Denver.

According to the Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research, "When left unchecked, chronic inflammation can lead to fibrosis, which is permanent thickening or scarring of organ tissue."

Kerr has been named the national spokesperson for the Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research, which is an organization in search of a cure. It also provides support for those who have it and advances treatment options to improve quality of life.

And, Kerr is hoping that by using his platform, he will be able to bring awareness to the disease that tends to see higher rates in African-Americans.

"I just want sarcoidosis to be one of those things that people are fighting for," the five-year NFL veteran said.

April is Sarcoidosis Awareness Month, and on April 13, those with sarcoidosis and their loved ones are encouraged to wear purple.

"Last year we saw purple hair, nails, bowties, rainboots, jewelry and more! Get creative and share with us how you're showing your support for Sarcoidosis Awareness Month," the organization wrote. "Share your photo on social media with the hashtags #PurplePower and #SarcoidStories to show off your purple swag- tag us on Facebook or on Twitter for your chance to be featured!"

So, for at least one day, Kerr and his family will trade in orange and blue, and wear purple. No matter your NFL allegiance, who can't root for that?

# Denver Bronco raising awareness for sarcoidosis

By Bobbi Sheldon

9 News

April 14, 2018

A Denver Bronco joined 9NEWS Saturday morning to help raise awareness for an important cause.

Zach Kerr recently became the National Spokesperson for the Foundation of Sarcoidosis Research. It's a cause that hits close to home for the defensive lineman.

Kerr's mom, Tinya, was diagnosed with the inflammatory disease that can affect any main organ in the body – most commonly the lungs.

The disease has no cure, and can make it challenging to do simple daily activities.

Kerr says he wanted to use his platform to spread awareness and help the thousands of people affected by the disease.