

Manalapan man joins faith group for athletes

BY ALESHA WILLIAMS
STAFF WRITER

Ask Peter Grandich of Manalapan and he'll tell you that faith is the glue holding together the lives of many professional athletes.

MANALAPAN

"Anybody who is thrust into the limelight always faces pressures — the womanizing, drugs, the alcohol," said Grandich, 50, founder of Trinity Financial Sports and Entertainment Management Co., Millstone, a "Biblically-based financial services company."

"Athletes — in my opinion, sometimes unfairly — have to engage in the role of role model," he said.

Faith is the reason Grandich recently joined the staff of Athletes in Action.

The national organization's New York/New Jersey chapter provides chapel and weekly Bible study services for professional and college teams including the New York Yankees, Giants, Red Bulls and New Jersey Nets.

Affiliated athletes include Yankees' pitcher Mariano Rivera, Giants' wide receiver David Tyree and Nets' point guard Jason Kidd, among others, according to www.nynjaia.com.

The chapter also sends team athletes to speak about their faith and good decision-making at outreaches for schools, civic and business groups, Grandich said.

Grandich's new role will allow him to expand the now-largely Protestant chapter services to Catholic athletes, he said.

Grandich, who is a congregant at St. Veronica's Catholic Church in Howell, will lead athletes' Bible studies and coordinate chapel services. He'll also act as a liaison between AIA and athletes who work with the group or those who are interested in getting involved, Grandich said.

"Knowing other fellow Christians helps the players tend to bond together, and for lack of a better phrase, keep each other on the straight and narrow," Grandich said.

"The ultimate goal is to have all players interdenominationally participate," he said. "The Bible studies are where a lot of the individual men will express their feelings, doubts, troubles, and to be part of that and to be entrusted with that."

Grandich has worked with athletes for five years through Trinity, which he founded in 2001 with partner and two-time SuperBowl champion NY Giant Lee Rouson. Trinity board members include former Philadelphia Eagles and Tampa Bay Buccaneers Running Back Reggie Brown, former heavy-weight boxer Gerry Cooney and former New York Giant Keith Elias.

George McGovern, the AIA chapter's chapel leader for the Yankees and the Giants, said he expects Grandich to increase involvement.

"Whether it's taking an athlete to speak at a men's event, co-leading team Bible studies, organizing golf or fishing trips, or casual time over a meal, Peter has contributed his knowledge and shared his heart for God with local pros in effective ways," McGovern said.



Welcoming Peter Grandich (center) are New York Giants' kicker Jay Feeley (from left), chapel leader George McGovern, wide receiver David Tyree, boxer Gerry Cooney, lineman Sean O'Hara and line-backer Antonio Pierce.