

## Thornton's Sponsorship of MiLB Youth Leadership Academy Latest in Long Line of Community Involvement

Andre Thornton played for the Chicago Cubs, Montreal Expos and Cleveland Indians during his 14-year Major League career. He hit 253 home runs and was named to the American League All-Star Team on two occasions, while a member of the Indians, a club that never finished better than fifth in Thornton's 10 seasons with them.

Cleveland's lack of success from 1977-87, however, didn't deter Thornton from becoming involved with community initiatives. He has continued his philanthropic ways ever since, including a sponsorship of The Minor League Baseball Youth Leadership Academy this summer.

Thornton is currently President and CEO of [ASW Global](#), located in the Northeast Ohio city of Mogadore, just southeast of Akron. ASW is one of the nation's largest minority-owned and Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) certified promotional product and third party logistics companies.

Global Promotions & Incentives LLC (GPI), a full service promotional merchandise, incentive and recognition supplier, is the procurement sourcing and fulfillment division of ASW Global.



*Andre Thornton  
(ASW Global)*

The MiLB Youth Leadership Academy was initiated to enhance and enrich the participants' academic achievements and expose participants to life skills training, positive peer development, career opportunities, personal development and health and wellness. More than 30 youths from eight MiLB cities participated in the inaugural event in July at Vero Beach Sports Village.

The opportunity to become a sponsor of the Academy and to provide a scholarship through Minor League Baseball Charities for one student to attend it coincided with Thornton's business philosophy.

"Part of our organization's strategy and mission is clearly to be involved and impactful in our community wherever we can and especially impacting the lives of youth in our community, especially those who don't necessarily have the greatest opportunity of privilege," Thornton said. "So we look at areas where we think we can make a difference in the lives of young people in a very positive way."

When asked if there was one instance that began him down the path of his community involvement, Thornton explained that while he was with the Indians he was fortunate enough to have relationships with people that not only encouraged him but challenged him in terms of where he could make a difference in his community, whether it was with young people, community service or civic organizations.

He also remarked that residing in Cleveland year round contributed to his community involvement.

"I lived in the community in which I played, which I think is vitally important because it allows you to see where you can make a difference and become involved with people who are trying to do positive things," Thornton stated. "I think it was just a great opportunity for me to be in Cleveland. Cleveland is a very philanthropic and very giving and supporting community. I was fortunate enough to be a part of that and to be challenged by that."

Thornton exceeded the challenges presented to him on and off the field in such great fashion that Major League Baseball named him in 1979 as the recipient of its Roberto Clemente Award, given to the player who best exemplifies the game of baseball, sportsmanship, community involvement and the individual's contribution to his team.

Going forward, the 62-year-old Thornton said he will continue to strive to reach his personal, business and public goals, all of which involve positively impacting others, like those who attended the MiLB Youth Leadership Academy, as well as communities.

"I think first you have to start out personally, what are your goals," Thornton explained. "The goals for me personally, one is to be a man that walks worthy and lives the life that I believe is pleasing to the Lord. That's important to me because that sets the framework in which I work off. I think the responsibilities that go along with that, in not only trying to be the best person that I can be and best leader that I can be, that others who look at your life certainly can be encouraged and uplifted.

"I think from a business standpoint, we've already established our mission in terms of trying to impact the people that we do business with and make sure that we serve them in a kind of way that's going to continue to enhance and grow their own business opportunities; to impact associates in a way in which not only allows them the opportunity to grow and development, but also the opportunity to make a difference within our community.

"From a civic standpoint, to be involved and engaged in (my) community in a way that will help it continue to grow and exhibit the kind of vitality that makes it a wonderful place to live."