Jackie Robinson Day

BY JOSH CASTILLO | PHOTOS BY JON SOOHOO & JILL WEISLEDER

ON APRIL 15, Major League Baseball celebrated the 65th anniversary of Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in 1947 at Ebbets Field as a member of the Dodgers. Every year since 1997, Major League Baseball has kept Robinson’s memory alive with the celebration of Jackie Robinson Day, which for the last four years has included every Major League player wearing Robinson’s retired No. 42 in his honor.

Jackie Robinson Day is extra special for the Dodgers because he spent his entire 10-year career in the organization, and the Dodgers request to play at home every year on April 15 to honor his memory.

Another way the Dodgers help keep alive and grow Robinson’s legacy is through the Jackie Robinson Scholars program, which is a partnership between the Dodgers and the Jackie Robinson Foundation to provide 42 college scholarships every year to young people.
This year the Jackie Robinson Foundation and the Dodgers recognized seven Jackie Robinson Scholars attending his alma mater, UCLA, before the April 15 game at Dodger Stadium. The students are (their majors appear in parenthesis):

Shakinah Douglas (Political Science)  
Paulina Villanueva (Psychobiology)  
Ajwan Rading (Political Science & Public Policy)  
Brianna Atkins (English)  
Maltish Lorenzo (Biology)  
Neima Patterson (Business)  
Janae Osby (Neuroscience)  

Rading took great pride in receiving the scholarship and in honoring Robinson at Dodger Stadium: “I am entering my second year at UCLA. It’s an unbelievable honor because it enables me to go to college. It’s a testament to what Jackie Robinson stood for, he changed our lives.”

Robinson’s family members were also in attendance to help celebrate the foundation and its scholars. Robinson’s great nephew Dennis Robinson was on hand, and he is also an alumnus of the scholarship program. He said: “It was a foundation started by my Aunt Rachel, who wanted to reach out to underprivileged students who didn’t have the opportunity to go to college. The foundation helps fund and raise money to help provide students with the opportunity to go college.”

The Dodgers and the Jackie Robinson Foundation keep living the words that are inscribed on the late Hall of Famer’s tombstone: “A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives.”