

‘Dreams come true when you don’t give up’

American football star Hines Ward visits Korea for first time in eight years, delivers message of hope to multicultural youth
‘My role going forward is to help multicultural children dream bigger’



American football star Hines Ward is interviewed by Yonhap News at the Bucheon City Museum in Gyeonggi Province on June 29.

“I’m a person who never gives up. Whether it’s the Super Bowl, or my own life, my mindset has always been the same.”

Hines Ward (49), a Korean American football legend and former NFL Super Bowl MVP who has returned to Korea after eight years, delivered a heartfelt message of encouragement to youth from multicultural and immigrant backgrounds in an interview with Yonhap News.

Ward had recently attended the “2025 Touchdown of Hope with Hines Ward,” an event held by the Pearl Buck Foundation Korea (Chair Ryu Jin) at the Bucheon City Museum’s Woollim Auditorium, and instilled hope and courage in multicultural youth.

He practiced basic American football moves with multicultural youth, participated in traditional games like “jegichagi” and “ttakjichigi,” and collaborated on a collaborative art project themed around dreams.

“The time I spent sweating and laughing with the children was so precious,” he said. “I hope these moments will leave a small source of courage in their hearts.”



Family members attend the event with Hines Ward. From left: Hines Ward’s mother, Kim Young-hee; Hines Ward; his daughter Jordyn Ward; wife Lindsay Ward; and mother-in-law, Jackie Georgalas.



Looking back on his own life, he confessed: “I experienced bullying and discrimination as a child because of my mixed race. I was always lonely and lost, not knowing who I was.”

He added that his mother’s support was a great strength, and his resolve to “never give up” shaped him into the person he is today.

“My mother endured much more difficult times than I did,” he said. “Some Koreans even sarcastically called her ‘coal mother.’ She came to the United States alone from Korea and raised me amidst prejudice. I have always respected her life, and I want to be someone who can share the love I received.

“To understand who I am, I had to first understand where I came from. My mixed-race identity and multicultural background are the most important assets that have shaped who I am today.”

Ward was born to a Korean mother and an American father and raised in the U.S. state of Georgia. Joining the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1998, he became a key player on the team as a wide receiver and made history by winning the 2006 Super Bowl MVP, becoming the first American of Asian descent to do so. He then led the Steelers to another victory in the Super Bowl in 2009 and completed an Ironman triathlon in 2013.

The Pearl Buck Foundation praised him, saying, “He has contributed significantly to enhancing youth self-esteem by practicing the values of inclusion and diversity from back in a time when multicultural awareness was lacking.”

‘I will help children from multicultural families dream bigger’

Since 2006, he has supported mixed-race children’s visits to the United States through the “Hines Ward Trip” program with the Pearl Buck Foundation. He has also continued his social contribution activities, including hosting an event for multicultural children with the U.S. Embassy in Korea on



Hines Ward explains the fundamentals of American football to multicultural youth at the “2025 Touchdown of Hope with Hines Ward” event held at the Bucheon City Museum in Gyeonggi Province on June 29.



Hines Ward colors with multicultural children.

Children’s Day in 2010.

Ward explained: “My role going forward is to help children from multicultural families feel proud of themselves and dream bigger. This visit to Korea is part of a journey with ESPN, the American sports channel, to promote greater social change for multicultural families.”

He concluded by saying to the youth participants: “We are not alone. We are special. Never give up and believe in yourself.” 🇺🇸