



PHOTOS BY ANNA REED / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Blair Wheadon, a former Western Oregon University basketball player, dresses as Mrs. Claus while helping with a dribbling session during the free kid's basketball clinic, part of the Capitol City Classic tournament, at Willamette University in Salem.

# 'Jingle Skills' basketball clinic has Christmas theme

GARY HOROWITZ  
STATESMAN JOURNAL

It's not every day that children have the opportunity to learn basketball skills from Santa Claus.

That was among the highlights Dec. 22 during the Jingle Skills Rock Christmas Kids Clinic at Sparks Center at Willamette University.

The clinic, which included about 200 boys and girls ages 7 to 14, was held in conjunction with the second annual Capitol City Classic basketball tournament.

Kids clinic director Mike McShane, a member of South Salem's 1996 boys basketball state championship team who played college hoops at Oregon and Montana State, needed to look no further than his first cousin, Kevin McShane, for an ideal Santa Claus.

"I asked him if he could dress up as a 6-foot-9 Santa," Mike said of his cousin, who played college basketball at Oregon

State. "I talked to him and told him what was going on and was like, 'Man, we've gotta get you in a Santa suit.'"

How convenient that Kevin's mom just happened to have a Santa Claus suit that fit her tall son.

In keeping with the Christmas spirit, Kevin McShane's friend, former Western Oregon standout Blair Wheadon, dressed as Mrs. Claus. Talk about a refreshing take on basketball instruction.

"The reason this (kids clinic) seemed so appealing to me is that it was open to anybody," Kevin McShane said. "Anybody could come and all the people working are here because they want to be. No one's getting paid. Let's have some holiday fun, let's coach these kids, and just have a great day."

By all accounts it was a spirited success.

Children were instructed on the nuances of the game by former Mid-Valley players and coaches who gave their time

for a worthy cause.

"It's a recipe for happiness, a gift to the community," said Mike McShane, an elementary school physical education teacher in Tulsa, Oklahoma, who returned home to be part of the clinic.

Grayson "The Professor" Boucher, who attained international fame as a streetball player with the AND1 Mixtape Tour," stayed well after the three-hour clinic to pose for pictures with youngsters who have followed his career.

Alyvia Smart, a fifth grader at Cloverdale Elementary School in Turner, called Boucher her basketball inspiration.

"He inspired me to start playing basketball and try harder," Smart said.

Boucher, who grew up in Keizer and graduated from Salem Academy High School, lives near Los Angeles these days and recently returned from a five-country tour of "personal bookings." He is a basketball wizard when it comes to dribbling and ball handling.

Boucher said Thursday's clinic took him back to his roots, attending summer basketball camps and incorporating skills he learned.

"So to be able to give back to the new generation and to help them in any way I can is definitely a great feeling," Boucher said.

Turnout was so strong for the kids clinic that Mike McShane said the main challenge next year will be finding space to accommodate the goal of 1,000 participants. He noted that it will remain free.

Barry Adams, a high school coaching legend in Oregon who led a South Salem team that featured Mike McShane to the 1996 state championship, was among a distinguished group of coaches who offered their expertise.

"This is great," Adams said. "Basketball's always been about kids."

ghorowitz@StatesmanJournal.com,  
503-399-6726 or Twitter.com/ghorowitz



Barry Adams, left, a National Coaches Association Hall of Fame inductee and former South Salem basketball coach, leads a session during the free kid's basketball clinic.



Kids practice dribbling during the free kid's basketball clinic, part of the Capitol City Classic tournament, at Willamette University.



ABOVE: Clackamas Community College head basketball coach Clif Wegner helps a boy during a passing session. RIGHT: Kids practice their defensive moves.

