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Mapleton couple Jesika and Will Crook serve as head coaches of their own Sailors basketball programs as well as assistant coaches for each other.

**Love** from 1B

where Will was beginning his studies for a master's degree in education. Jesika, an all-around athlete, became part of the track program. Will, coincidentally, was an assistant track coach in a program where he had been an All-American.

"So technically, I became her track coach," says Will with a small eyebrow raise.

"It's true," admits Jesika. "and we've been together in some kind of coaching situation practically ever since."

And the best part? "No more long-distance phone calls," says Will. "We can talk basketball all night if we want and it doesn't cost a dime."

Given that both came from a small, 1A high school similar to Mapleton, coaching programs that have a combined 22 players between them is a natural fit.

"I was assistant coach at a 6A school while I was earning my teaching credential, and it was crazy," says Will. "There's no time to form any real relationships in a situation like that. To me, building relationships is crucial — not just for having a successful team, but for being successful in life."

Jesika, who graduated with a bachelor's degree in public health education the same year Will graduated with his master's degree in education, is especially tuned to the importance of relationships.

As a specialist in abuse pre-

vention, she understands that what they do as coaches adds up to more than wins and losses.

"It's one of the reasons I jumped at the chance when this position opened up," Jesika says. "In a school this size, you have a chance to really get to know the kids and have an impact."

When asked if it's tough to switch from head coach to assistant, both shake their heads immediately and in sync.

"It's awesome having an outside perspective from someone whose opinion you respect," says Will. "She knows her stuff and always has great suggestions."

"We're not in this for our egos," says Jesika, "so that never gets in the way. I enjoy sitting back a little when I'm assisting him, and I like having his feedback when it's his turn to sit back a little."

Will laughs. "It sure makes the debriefing easy, that's for sure."

After no basketball season for the girls last season, the team now has nine players, with the potential for a couple more after the holidays.

The boys, which had seven players last season, has a solid 13-man roster this year.

"The program essentially doubled from last season, which is great to see," says Will. "And everyone is working hard and wants to be successful."

"There is a winning attitude developing."

Earlier in the week, both

teams took time to write out their goals for the season and beyond.


"Everyone wants to take the program to the next level," says Jesika. "Both teams want to

finish high enough to make the play-offs and maybe reach state."

"And everyone understands it takes commitment to get there," adds Will. "We have a

road map and know it's a journey."

And this time, the Crooks know however long the distance, they'll be traveling it together.



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