



Metro/Sports

Unity Week Basketball Tournament a success

CONTRIBUTOR STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The second annual Unity Week basketball tournament and clinic was a success, providing coaching and mentoring to 80 inner-city young men. Under the direction of LaVon Vann founder and director of Successful Choices, the week included daily workouts at Irving Park then a two-day tournament at the Salvation Army.

The clinic gave the young men the opportunity to work on their skills as well as being turned on to positive people in the community. Each day different people from the community spoke and shared knowledge with the young men.

Former Portland Trail Blazer Darnell Valentine was there providing support and wisdom for athletics and life. Avery, who works with college and NBA players told the young men that they should use basketball to get free education and open doors of opportunity.

John Phillips spoke about preparation for life and the importance of being able to present themselves in a positive manner.

Another former Blazer, Kermit Washington, spoke about hard work and the importance of surrounding yourself with positive people. Life skills were stressed more than basketball skills.

U choice what U want be, is the theme for Successful Choices. "The choices you



make today will affect you tomorrow," says Vann. "This event is designed to identify young at-risk youth in the community, bring them together for a positive event and introduce Successful Choices as an organization providing alternatives for our youth," adds Vann.

The weekend tournament provided exciting basketball with the team from Music Galore defeating Eddie's Ribs 96-87 in a well played game. MVP

Itrelle Lambert scored 27 points and played great defense in leading his team to victory. Jalante Martin added 22 points with an assortment of dunks and dazzling moves. Bruce Jones and Ryan Carroll had 23 points apiece for the losing team. Young Jerar Nelson gave the overflowing crowd an awesome display in winning the slam-dunk contest. Nelson leaped over three chairs and had the crowd and everyone went home true winners.

This summer has proven that there is a high level of basketball being played in Portland Oregon. It also showed that with the effort of many, a lot of young people could be reached. LaVon Vann, Paul Kelly, Bill Porter and Anthony Steward should be commended for their efforts. 80 young men made the right choice when they played in the Successful Choices basketball tournament. Look for bigger and better thing next summer.

Greater Northwest Summer league had game



There was a lot of basketball this summer, but none as exciting than the Greater Northwest Summer League. This year's summer league featured the top college players in Oregon and Washington along with guest appearances from Portland Trail Blazer Damon Stoudamire. The group of Courtside Entertainment consisting of Canaan Chatman, Erin Cowen, Pat Strickland and Deray Thridgill, put together a concept of skill development as well as attitude development. Former college players who delivered the message of team play and positive attitudes coached the eight teams. The level of play was intense with plenty of funk and smooth basketball entertainment. Basketball was not the only thing taught in this league. Many new friendships were made as well as attitude adjustments. The success of the league proves that when positive forces in the community join together great things can happen for our youth. The Greater Northwest Summer League will only get bigger and better next year.

THINGS TO DO

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- take Billy to basketball practice
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