

BEYOND THE BALL

MEMPHIS ATHLETIC MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER

“Bricks” can build more than buildings

The heart behind the idea

---PAGE 2

Did you know?

---PAGE 2

Biology lab in a gym closet

Four MAM students research fruit flies for college credit

---PAGE 3

Off the court

Shanbria is a MAM teen who is becoming career ready

---PAGE 3



MAM Insights from the President “Bricks” can build more than buildings

It was a Sunday afternoon in March when I walked into the gym at Immanuel Lutheran Church in East Memphis, not knowing exactly what to expect, but anticipating that something incredible was going to happen. Previously, a member of Immanuel had contacted MAM about hosting a basketball tournament with all the proceeds going to MAM. The heart behind the idea was to use the church’s resources to benefit our city’s urban youth. The intent of the event was to play some serious basketball, glorify God with positive attitudes, strong bodies and athletic ability, have fun and raise some money.

What I witnessed over the next few hours can only be described as amazing. I saw young boys, all African-American, walk into a gym in a part of town they seldom visit, a world away from their own streets. They were uncomfortable. They were unsure of themselves. They had their guard up. But slowly with the sound of basketballs being dribbled and shots swirling through the nets, the only guards that were up were in the game itself. The men of the church embraced the young men of MAM without any reservation. White and black men of the faith reached out to young black kids they had never met, showing them the unconditional love that Jesus gives us all.

With all the crazy black vs white, white vs black media-driven stories we see on the news today, this event was a reminder that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Ace of Spades. In the deck of cards that society has been dealt, the Gospel trumps it all. These men and boys laughed, joked, and competed with great attitudes throughout the afternoon. Three pointers, free throws and bricks clanked off rims all day long. There was a “spirit of oneness” in the air. It reminded the older men of the church that each of them can give back; each can invest in the younger men of Memphis, no matter their creed, color or social standing. Each youth met many men who may have a different skin color, but truly care and want each boy to grow up to be a man who lives a life of passion for our Lord in a tangible way every day.



MAM loves partnerships like the one with Immanuel Lutheran Church, and we welcome more and more partners as we work to build Christ-centered youth who love God, love others and love themselves. Through these partnerships, relationships that change the hearts and lives of our underserved youth are formed. And those changed youth are impacting their neighborhoods and families with the love of Christ.

Randy

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Biology lab in a gym closet

A closet off a basketball court at the MAM St. Andrew center in South Memphis is a strange place to impact the future of high school students. Add a few microscopes and some fruit flies plus a willing professor and four eager young scientists and a college-level biology class is formed.

Last summer Ernie Prude, MAM St. Andrew neighborhood director, and Angela Ventura-Wooten, head of dual enrollment at Southwest Tennessee Community College and MAM parent, had a brainstorming session.

"I was actually thinking of a way to get the parents to take college classes," says Ernie. "I started talking to Ms. Wooten and she said she could do it first with the students."

Now Jasmine Baker, Angela Maxwell, Jamarius Duncan and Daniel Thomas are earning college credits after their school day at Hamilton High School. As part of the curriculum, they are researching fruit fly genetics through the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation grant, created to accelerate the number of minority students studying science in college.

Their dual enrollment class is held Wednesday and Thursday afternoons and Saturday mornings. The fruit fly research takes place in the closet at MAM St Andrews. The students also go to Southwest to do traditional biology lab work. On Saturdays the four students are at MAM St. Andrew, listening to Professor Ventura-Wooten's biology lecture.

"It's not that hard, if you stay focused and organized and keep up with your notes," says Angela.

In April, Southwest honored Memphis Athletic Ministries' four students as its most prestigious dual-enrollment students. They will have six college credits by the time school is over this spring, including three from a freshman intro-to-college course the students took at MAM last fall.

Professor Ventura-Wooten wants to continue to offer college courses through the Southwest dual enrollment program to the students at MAM St. Andrew. "As long as the students work hard, stay focused and committed to learning, I will work to make these courses available at MAM St. Andrew."



Mark Weber / The Commercial Appeal

Off the court

Currently nine teens are participating in MAM's new **career readiness program**. The goal is to develop employable, manageable, prepared individuals for workforce success after high school. The students are encouraged to excel in areas such as perseverance and integrity, to establish goals and to make long-term plans for pursuing a career path. The students are learning biblical work principles, interviewing skills and resume writing skills.

One of these teens in the career readiness programs is Shanbria Webster, an 11th grader who attends KIPP Memphis Collegiate High. She has been actively involved at MAM Greenlaw since sixth grade. Shanbria is the only student at her school to make the Principal's List. She currently has a 4.0 GPA.

Shanbria is always willing to share the gospel with her peers. Through the career readiness program, Shanbria works as an assistant youth coordinator at MAM Greenlaw where she is learning to mentor younger youth. She was part of a mission team to Honduras three summers ago to feed the hungry and help conduct a vacation bible school.



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