

BEYOND THE BALL

MEMPHIS ATHLETIC MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER

Giggles abound at MAM

"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."
Proverbs 4:23

It's not easy being a girl today. Girls from all walks of life are at risk for issues such as eating disorders, self-image problems, anxiety and depression. For girls from low income neighborhoods, the risks are greater and the issues often more serious.

"Our under-served girls face many obstacles in their everyday lives. They need someone who believes in them and keeps them focused on discovering God's will for their lives," says April Golden, MAM Greenlaw assistant director.

April and our other MAM staff ladies are fostering warm, safe, consistent relationships with these girls. Giggles echo in our gyms every day after school as girls socialize in their new ladies' lounges. And as more girls seek refuge in MAM centers, our female youth workers are implementing activities to inspire our girls to try something new.

MAM girls are:

- **Community service advocates.** They have baked cookies for a police precinct, helped with JoyProm (a prom for children with special needs), and visited nursing homes.
- **Cheerleaders.** Elementary and middle school girls from MAM Olivet and MAM St. Andrew cheer at their home basketball games.
- **Girl Scouts.** Troops are forming this fall at the MAM Grizzlies Center, MAM Leewood, MAM Olivet and MAM Bethel LaBelle.
- **Chefs.** They are cooking nutritious, good food in our gyms with kitchens.
- **Athletes.** Along with basketball, MAM girls are playing volleyball.
- **Healthy.** The girls are staying healthy with fitness classes.
- **Majorettes.** MAM Greenlaw girls are twirling batons.
- **Historians.** MAM Hamilton girls are studying famous African-American women and praying each week for a different country.
- **Fun.** Movie nights, fashion shows, slumber parties, karaoke, game nights, tea parties and book clubs keep our young ladies more than busy.
- **Mentees.** Naturally where girls are gathered, there is Girl Talk! Girls and their mentors meet regularly to discuss dating, self-image, modesty and other pertinent topics.
- **Growing in Christ.** Our girls are learning godly womanhood - including God's mandate to guard their hearts.

If you would like to share a special skill, talent or life lesson with our girls, contact Allison Weiss at aweiss@mamsports.org or 901-378-6585.



MAM Insights from the President: The MAM League, more than a game

It's the fourth quarter and the team I am coaching is winning by one point. There are eight seconds on the clock. The other team has the ball. They call a timeout to set the play.

Now I know their best shooter, so I yell to my team, "Guard him close! Don't get caught standing! Hands up on the shooters! Do not let #21 touch the ball!"

The ball is inbounded and immediately passed to #21 (the ONE player we didn't want to touch the ball). The clock is ticking down; he takes a dribble, steps back and lets a shot fly. The ball sails through the air in slow motion. The entire gym watches the ball. It is a perfect shot, arch, soft touch and then the ball goes through the hoop.

Half the gym erupts in screams and joy experiencing the thrill of victory. My team feels the agony of defeat.

All of my players' eyes are on Marcus. Marcus is the player who was guarding their best shooter #21. I ran up to Marcus, and in my head I am thinking, "I TOLD YOU NOT TO LET HIM CATCH THE BALL. HOW DID YOU NOT HAVE A HAND UP ON THAT SHOT?" But before I said that, I took a deep breath, and I could feel the eyes of my team on me.

Marcus turned and looked at me. I had two choices: I could build him up or I could crush him. I looked Marcus in the eyes, grabbed his shoulders, and knelt down. (Marcus was in the 10th grade, but he was really short) I said loudly, "Marcus that was the best defense anyone could have played. There was nothing better you could have done. You are awesome, and I'm very proud of you! The shot just went in. Nothing more you could have done. Good game."

At that moment the entire atmosphere surrounding my team changed. Marcus smiled and ducked his head. I coached him up and said, "Keep your head up. You did your best. It is not your fault we came up short." The other players followed suit and encouraged Marcus. Even though the loss hurt, we all learned some valuable life lessons in that moment.

This scene happens all the time in our MAM sports leagues and during our Christmas Classic. Whether a team wins or loses, life-changing experiences are happening. A child is lifted up by encouraging words from a coach. Team members see a caring coach and become caring teammates. Our league gives at-risk boys and girls the opportunity to be coached by a caring adult, to be part of a team, to be needed and to matter. In the MAM league, urban and suburban kids come together to compete on the same court. Here they see sameness, not differences.

One of our goals is for all players to learn how to compete. The most important goal, however, is bridging the gap between races, socio-economic levels and geography. All of these things take place in a Gospel-focused environment.

I encourage you to consider being a volunteer coach for a MAM team or sign up your own team to play in the 24th Annual MAM Christmas Classic basketball tournament, and be a part of changing lives through coaching.



Randy



Looking ahead...

Registration has begun for the annual **MAM Christmas Classic Basketball Tournament** to be held December 19 - December 22, 2016.

A Memphis tradition, the MAM Classic is our largest fundraiser each year. Church league teams, recreational teams, competitive teams and middle school teams are invited to play. Games are played at various urban and suburban locations throughout the county. For more information, go to <http://mamsports.org/classic/>.

Billy Buford: Memphis Tiger 1972-74

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing" John 15:5 (NLT)

"This verse is my mantra," says Billy, MAM area director. "I thought I was a big shot until Coach Gene Bartow told me I wasn't."

Thus begins the story of Billy's days as Memphis Tiger #20, playing on the team that lost to Bill Walton and UCLA in the NCAA Championship Game on March 26, 1973.

"Playing basketball at Memphis taught me so many life lessons – a sense of responsibility, compassion, tolerance, and last but not least, humility. Little did I know that God was preparing me for helping kids at MAM."

Billy started his basketball career at Glasgow (Kentucky) High School. At Paducah Community College, he was an All American player with as he says "a big head."

"I was a country boy and had been the Big Dog until I came to Memphis State. Coach Bartow immediately let me know that I was only one piece of the puzzle." Billy explains. "I thought that I was losing my clout and I didn't like it. In high school and junior college, I had loved the accolades of being a star. Having been Number One, I had to learn quickly that I was at Memphis to serve my teammates. They weren't there to serve me. Needless to say, I had to learn to be humble really quickly if I wanted to play."

After becoming a Christian, Billy sees how the life lessons he learned playing for Coach Bartow shaped him into being a servant leader at MAM. And he has been faithfully sharing the wisdom learned from these life lessons to our boys and girls since he joined MAM in 2007.

"Jesus is so humble and is so patient with me. He taught me that it was okay not to be the Big Dog, that He loved me in spite of my imperfect ways. I want our kids to know that Jesus made them and He loves them unconditionally. I want our kids to know that they can come to Him anytime, anywhere. When all else fails in their lives, Jesus will always be there for them."

Off the court:

School year 2017-18 brings more mentoring activities



The new school year at MAM is in motion! Old faces and new are at each MAM center. After school recreation and socializing still bring students to our centers. Our youth are still playing sports, doing academics and learning about Jesus. Our staff continues to build life-changing relationships. Most importantly, MAM continues to be blessed with opportunities to challenge our boys and girls.

Through partnerships with other local organizations, MAM has several new activities this fall to serve our youth:

- **Girl Scouts troops** have started. Five staff members are stepping up to lead two elementary, two middle school troops and one high school troop at four centers.
- **Code Crew**, a nonprofit teaching underserved youth computer training, is holding an after school coding program this fall at the MAM Grizzlies Center. Students are learning hands-on computer science training including beginner level design and programming of mobile applications.
- **GrizzFit**, a Grizzlies program designed to teach boys and girls about getting active, eating right and making healthy choices in life, is now being held at the MAM Grizzlies, MAM Leawood and MAM St. Andrew centers.
- **Literacy coaching**, in conjunction with Literacy Mid-South, is taking place each weekday at three MAM centers that serve approximately 160 elementary youth.



THANK YOU FOR BELIEVING IN OUR MISSION! Each contribution makes a difference.

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40% of MAM youth are girls, ages 8 to 18. This number continues to grow as girls find acceptance, compassion, and a sense of God's purposes for their lives within MAM walls.