

BEYOND THE BALL

MEMPHIS ATHLETIC MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER

MPD officers are PALs with MAM youth

"For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose." | Philippians 2:13

It is Saturday afternoon in Orange Mound. The sounds of a competitive basketball game spill out onto Larose Avenue outside MAM's Bethel LaBelle youth center. A couple of police cars are parked outside the center, not usually a friendly sight for most residents of this community. But today is different. Since October, police cars and the men who drive them are welcoming sights at MAM centers thanks to a new initiative by the Memphis Police Department.

The Memphis Police Athletic League (PAL) program is a community outreach program that gives officers a chance to coach youth basketball teams in the neighborhoods they serve. PAL is mentorship at its best, as officers and youth interact in safe, fun environments.

"It's my old stomping ground," says "Coach" Officer Duriel Temple, about the gym at MAM Bethel LaBelle. "I grew up hooping in this gym when it was a city community center. I went to all the neighborhood schools and graduated from Melrose High. I was lucky. I made the right choices and have now been a Memphis police officer for seven years."

Cayden Williams, a sixth grader at Sherwood Middle School, thinks it is especially cool that Coach Temple went to his elementary and middle schools. He says that all the policemen are nice coaches and "they know how to make us play as a team and they teach us respect."

Officer Temple says that he is honored to be able to serve as a coach at MAM. "As a police officer, I am tasked with breaking down barriers and changing the negative perceptions our youth have of officers. I understand where the kids' thinking comes from. Growing up in Orange Mound, I saw officers arrest the dads of my friends. We were always fearful that the police would just show up and take our dads away and we would never see them again. Now as PAL coaches, we can change our youth's ideas about the police. They will see us as people who truly care about them and want them to choose the right path."

Rendon Bradley, MAM Bethel LaBelle neighborhood director, is grateful for all the MPD officers who are bridging the gap. "The officers embrace these kids and the kids see they can trust these officers. **More trust builds a better Orange Mound and a much better Memphis.**"



If you would like to share a special skill, talent or life lesson with our youth, email volunteer@mamsports.org!