

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!

MAM Insights from the President: Reimagine our youth

We believe Memphis is a city of great opportunity. Our youth are no exception. Opportunity youth are 16 to 24 year olds who can add value to their regions if they reconnect with school and/or jobs. Memphis has nearly 50,000 opportunity youth who are neither in school nor working. The highest percentage in the country.



Memphis also has about 80,000 children (approximately 40 percent of all children under 18) who live in under-resourced homes. Another one of the highest percentages in the country.

It is a disturbing reality that almost one of every two children in Memphis are living in poverty. But the child poverty rate is not a secret. There's no lack of knowledge - only a lack of action.

In a city with such pride about its faith and its belief in the American Dream, the Tigers and the Grizzlies, it is unsettling that most citizens give little thought to child poverty. If these children are out of sight, they are out of mind.

We brag about rising graduation rates but only 7% of high school seniors are prepared for college or career. We must do better. This monumental task belongs to everyone, including MAM, our city and county governments, schools, faith-based organizations, churches, the families of these kids, and the kids themselves.

Forzando's story on the next page will help shift our perceptions. We must reimagine how we see these kids, to see them as assets rather than problems. We must help them reimagine themselves and see themselves as having value in their hometown. PLACES CHANGE WHEN PEOPLE CHANGE.

I ask you to join us and make an investment in the children of our city. Your investment will not only change the life of a child but will change your life as well.

Thank you,

Randy



Did you know?

We are pumped to be partnering with the Memphis Redbirds and RBI (Returning Baseball to the Inner City) this summer as we start MAM baseball! Our first MAM Baseball Clinic on March 11th was a huge success. Our kids are so excited to learn and play this sport!



Meet a #MAM Kid: Forzando Mebane



"I'm going to college. There's no ifs, ands or buts about it," says Forzando, an honor student at Kipp Memphis Collegiate High School. "I am going to be an electrical engineer, work, and then get my Ph.D. – at least that's the plan now." Several colleges are already recruiting Forzando to join their engineering programs.

Since second grade, Forzando has been coming to MAM Greenlaw. Like many MAM kids, he came with friends to play basketball. Now as a junior in high school, Forzando is truly a leader with a servant heart and a winning attitude.

He claims Jesus as his closest friend and has learned to lean on his Savior through the ups and downs of life.

Forzando works part-time at Chick-fil-A. As a participant in our career readiness program, he says Coach Kyle Bennison, career readiness director, taught him to think long-term and that short-term decisions affect his future.

"Coach Kyle also enforced networking skills. He took us to a job event early one Saturday morning. I didn't want to get up so early, but Coach said it was up to us to get a job, so I went. I met the general manager at Chick-fil-A and now I have a job. I see that all the soft and hard skills Coach Kyle drilled into us really do work at a real job. I am proud of myself and I thank God, too."

We are proud of Forzando, his zest for pursuing the Christian life, and his desire to excel where God leads him!

Looking ahead . . .

Forty-one MAM kids are awaiting a week at Kids Across America (KAA) camp in Branson, Missouri in June.

Kasey Spencer, MAM high school girls mentor, says, "Camp gives us an incredible opportunity to share Jesus. Not only do we have the perfect platform of God's creation, but we have 24/7 to pour into each child. Our staff comes home exhausted, but so thankful that we deepened relationships through walks in the woods and late night conversations."

To go, each camper must contribute \$60. Each MAM center is hosting a fundraising event. For more info, visit: <http://www.mamsports.org/camp>.



On the court:

Forming Fun Friendships

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." | John 15:12



George, Townes, and Palmer, fourth graders at Grace St. Luke's Episcopal School, and their teammates from the MAM Grizzlies Center all have one goal in mind: to have fun playing basketball together.

"I thought it was good we had new people on the team; we can do better and they will help," says MAM player Jordan of his new friends.

"Basketball is a fun way to meet someone new. We are friends and we all get to glorify God together through this amazing game," says George.

When asked about their differences in skin color, George and Jordan agreed "we are the same." George went on to paraphrase Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s words,

that it is not the color of your skin, but the content of your character that counts.

We are thankful for these kids who are bridging the gap.

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

To donate by credit/debit card, go to www.mamsports.org/give.
You can make a one-time donation or set up a recurring monthly gift.

To donate by cash or check, complete the form below and mail your gift to 2107 Ball Road, Memphis, TN. 38114.

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Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” | Matthew 22:37-39