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Children pick up hoop tips at summer basketball clinic

BY ROB CULLIVAN
The Gresham Outlook, Jul 30, 2008

Katen Singler, a senior at Oregon State University, Adrian Stelly, a graduate of the University of Oregon, and Jordan Davidson, a senior at Duke University, spent midday July 16 running children around the gymnasium at Lynch View Elementary School, 1546 S.E. 169th Place.



Thomas Harkness, 10, goes for a layup during the Trail Blazers basketball camp at Lynch View Elementary School on Wednesday, July 16.

JIM CLARK / THE GRESHAM OUTLOOK

As the children paused to catch their breaths, Stelly noted he and his two young adult companions had a bit of an ulterior motive in running the youngsters around – one of them might be a future Portland Trail Blazer.

“When they get a little older, you never know,” Stelly said.

Stelly, Singler and Davidson are interning this summer with the Blazers, who are working with Nike to put on free basketball clinics for youngsters in Oregon and Washington.

Stelly added that the clinics are drilling the budding basketball players on such essential skills as dribbling and passing.

“Fundamentals have been lacking in basketball, so we’re trying to encourage fundamentals,” he said.

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The clinic at Lynch View coincided with the federally funded free lunch program operated by Metropolitan Family Service, which provides summer programs for children through the Schools Uniting Neighborhoods or SUN program.

Pat Kaczmarek, spokeswoman for Metropolitan Family Service, complimented the Blazers and Nike for the clinic.

“They’ve been just awesome to work with,” she said. “Just to have to have that kind of quality of programming for the kids during the summer was just phenomenal.”

The clinic was a slam-dunk with the Lynch View youngsters, the sound of whose squeaking sneakers echoed off the gym walls like screeching mice. Micaela Molina, 6, said she was enjoying learning how to dribble and make baskets.

“I like shooting the balls because you can shoot it high,” she said.

Travis Livengood, 11, said he appreciated the free T-shirt Nike provided each youngster as well as the chance to test himself against other players.

“I like to be athletic,” he said, adding he particularly enjoys basketball “because you get more muscles in your arms.”

Ian Jaquiss, the Blazers’ basketball outreach director, said the team and Nike want to encourage youngsters to get out of the house and play this summer.

Stelly added, however, that the college interns needed no higher motivation.

“We’re having more fun than the kids,” he said with a smile.

Blazer ball

The Trail Blazers and Nike have partnered for several years to provide free basketball clinics for children across the state. This summer the Trail Blazers’ and Nike’s “Let Me Play” program are bringing clinics to parks around Portland for boys and girls ages 8 through 13. All skill levels are welcome.

The next clinic in East County runs from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday, Aug. 8, at Harold Oliver Intermediate School, 15840 S.E. Taylor St.

Lunch will be provided. For more information, visit www.nba.com/blazers/makeitbetter/hoops_camp.html.

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