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Business

Play All Basketball

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By SEAN GARNER

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As he witnessed schools being closed, gym space disappearing and a continuously growing number of children living more and more sedentary lifestyles, Dave Smith knew he needed to do something about it.

Last year, Smith, a coach of a girls' Amateur Athletic Union basketball team and a member of the Waterford Public Schools board of education, began Play All Basketball, a side business aimed at maximizing the usage of basketball facilities in the Waterford and Clarkston areas.

Play All rents space at gymnasiums and he then allows others to use the court at \$3-\$5 per person.

Smith said he was compelled to start his business after noticing a disturbing scarcity of court space in the area, one that has been exacerbated by the recent economic downturns.

"What I noticed is that there are not a lot of opportunities for kids and their parents to participate in open gymnasium basketball," Smith said. "With schools closing buildings throughout Oakland County and throughout the Detroit metro area, there are even fewer opportunities. So I started Play All Basketball to provide a social, educational and athletic environment for youth to continue to play basketball."

Fellow AAU coach Mark Giroux said he knows firsthand how difficult and costly it can be to secure court space for his team. Before catching wind of Play All, Giroux said his 12 and under girls team would travel to a wide variety of locations ranging from Utica to Lake Orion in search of facilities, often at high costs.

"It's very difficult as an AAU coach to find gym time and gym space," Giroux said. "Because Dave is local, it looked like a great opportunity for me to get my players involved in his program to become better basketball players, and to make it less hectic for my basketball team during the winter."

Smith, a native of the basketball-crazy state of Indiana, said he would like to help create an environment similar to his own upbringing, where physical activity and family interaction were a normal aspect of daily life, not a periodical aberration.

"The one key is it helps keep families active," Smith said. "It helps kids that may not have access to a basketball gym to interact and play in a safe, age-appropriate and skill-appropriate environment. What we're doing is helping pry those kids from out in front of the PlayStation or the Xbox and giving them some good, structured athletic playtime."

Giroux, who has known Smith for several years through the AAU circuit, said Smith's energy and attitude make him a good advocate for the game and that his influence will rub off on surrounding communities.

"He's very professional and very passionate about the game of basketball," Giroux said. "I believe this is going to take off because this area needs it first and foremost. We've got a lot of young athletes in the area that are looking for opportunities just like this one and as Dave gets more and more recognition, I believe you'll see more and more of this kind of thing."

Smith said he plans to expand his business across Oakland County in the near future, as well as adding opportunities for football, baseball, hockey and soccer.

Play All will also be hosting camps and clinics this summer through the Waterford Community Education program.

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