

Sports camp gives children hope

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Park
Cities
CHAMPS
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devotion.
(Photos
by
Jessica
Dooley)

Sports camp gives children hope

By Jessica Dooley

Communications Intern

DALLAS—Two years ago, when Michal Powell was tutoring students through Buckner International’s Kids Hope USA program at Dan D. Rodgers Elementary School, she met an 11-year-old boy named Gabriel. He lived in a two-bedroom apartment complex with his mother, father, grandfather, 8-year-old twin siblings, three brothers, and 16-year-old sister and her 2-year-old son.

“Leaving the school after one of our sessions, I was struck by two things,” said Powell, a member of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas. “First, I was amazed at how very similar Gabriel was to my own sons.



SMU football player Caleb Peveto takes time to explain skills of the game to children attending the CHAMPS Sports Camp, hosted by Park Cities Baptist Church.

“Second, I was amazed how very different Gabriel’s life was from my own sons. While Gabriel’s home and ours were only three miles apart, he lives in extreme poverty. He loves sports, but has no way to receive any coaching

or support for this passion.

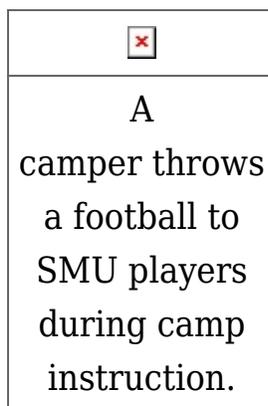
“It was through this experience with Gabriel that the idea of Champs was born.”

The mission of Champs Sports Camp, she explained, “is clear. For four evenings we seek volunteers to be used by God to bring his love and his message of hope through the glory of heaven to the children who participate in this camp.”

Champs Sports Camp was offered free to students entering grades four through six who live in the Vickery Meadow area of Dallas. Students are given an opportunity to develop their skills in a sport of their choice—football, soccer, basketball, or dance/cheer.

Meg York, volunteer coordinator at Park Cities, was in charge of crafts for those who did not want to engage in the sports and for campers’ parents waiting with younger siblings.

The camp also teamed up with the Fellowship of Christians Athletes, who helped provide professional coaches to lead each of the four sport skills. In addition, members of the Southern Methodist University football, basketball and soccer teams visited the camp each night.



“We were in their shoes once, and we know what it’s like,” said Caleb

Peveto, SMU football player. “We want to show them they can be successful too.”

When the students weren’t eating or perfecting the skills of their sports, they were in the auditorium singing praises, watching skits and listening to Powell as she gave a nightly devotional.

On the last night of the camp, the youth were encouraged to bring their parents for Family Night. During the devotional, children and their parents were given the New Testament in English or Spanish, and afterwards, parents watched a video of the week’s activities. The fellowship continued with a hot dog dinner in the cafeteria.

The Champs Sports Camp marks one aspect of Park Cities Baptist Church’s ongoing commitment to make an impact in the Vickery community.

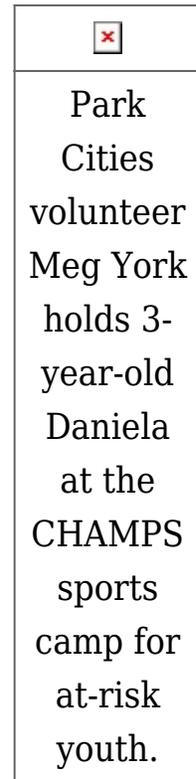
“God has placed on the hearts of our church leaders the children of the Vickery Meadow area,” Powell said. “Throughout the past few years, members of our church have been going weekly to Dan D. Rogers to mentor one on one with individual students at the elementary school (through Kids Hope USA.) In addition, on Wednesday evenings once a month, members of our church have been joining students and their families for an evening of food, fun and fellowship.

Sam Silva, Buckner and Park Cities director of community ministries, calls it “evangelism.”

“It’s non-threatening environment because they know the school and it’s a great asset to meet and invite families to church.” Silva said. “The ultimate goal is for adults and children to see Jesus through volunteers and workers at (Park Cities), and that they feel the love of Christ.”

It’s through events like these that Park Cities has teamed up with Buckner to reach children through the Vickery Family Wellness Center and mentor

students through Kids Hope USA.



Two factors—responsibility and missions—drive members of Park Cities Baptist Church to minister in the Vickery community, said Pastor Jim Denison.

“We need to encourage those close to our home. It doesn’t require a trip across town; it’s only a 10-minute drive down the road,” Denison said.

Powell told a story about four siblings who came to camp each night with their stomachs growling. And during snack time they seemed to devour everything in sight, only to want more. She soon discovered that the siblings only had a jug of a water and box of cereal at home.

Because of the hungry children, Powell made sure that every night each child left with an apple and even asked the Cooper Institute to come and speak to the students on proper nutrition and good health. After camp ended each night, Powell would take the four children home, but not before

first stopping for dinner and filling the four empty bellies.

“While many might look at the difficult and challenging lives of these children and become very discouraged, together we have an opportunity to give each of these children great hope,” Powell said. “Second Corinthians 4 tells us ‘...afflictions do not compare to the eternal weight of glory.’

“No doubt these children’s lives are full of poverty, pain and frustration we could not imagine, but one thing we know for sure, because of God’s almighty love for them, through Jesus, the glory of heaven can be theirs.”

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