



MAM's Summer Academy keeps kids' minds engaged

BY ANNE CHAMBERS

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Last summer for five days a week, 12-year-old Nicole Hayes went to the Memphis Grizzlies Center near Airways and Kesean Sutton, 10, went to the MAM Olivet Center on Knight Arnold. Day after day all summer long 400 other middle school boys and girls continued to come to these and six more centers for **MAM's Summer Academy**.

Summer Academy at **Memphis Athletic Ministries** is "hard to describe," says Kesean, a fifth-grader at Sheffield Elementary School. "Summer Academy is not just playing sports, but a bunch of fun things that keep me busy and out of trouble. It's learning about Jesus. It's spending a week at Victory Ranch. It's learning how to make good decisions. It's meeting nice people and going to new places all over Memphis, and pretty much, well, it's just the best summer ever."



Memphis Athletic Ministries' Summer Academy began in 2007 as an outreach summer program to serve the youth who participate in MAM programs throughout the year.

Nicole, a seventh-grader at Corry Middle School, says she likes Summer Academy for another reason. "At home, I just sit there all day watching television while my mom is at work. At Summer Academy, the teachers make me think, so I don't forget what I learned at school."

MAM's Summer Academy began in 2007 as an outreach summer program to serve the youth who participate in MAM programs throughout the year. Approximately 50 sixth- and seventh-grade boys attended the first camp at the Memphis Grizzlies Center. Continued success resulted in the 2010 camp serving more than 400 boys and girls from fourth to eighth grade in eight under-resourced neighborhoods across Memphis. The 2011 Summer Academy will serve 500 MAM children in ten locations.

"Most kids want to get involved in something. And they need watchful eyes and guidance during the long summer days," says Randy Odom, MAM community director. "We give the kids constructive activities in a safe, fun place to go where our staff cares about them, just like parents do."

Last summer, MAM partnered with the Memphis Teacher Residency, a non-profit organization whose mission is to recruit, equip and retain excellent teachers to work in Memphis' urban areas. Through this partnership, certified teachers conducted academic sessions every day at each site. These teachers used interactive games, such as baseball math and reading relays, to teach reading and math creatively along with online games available in MAM computer labs.

"Educators report that a student's learning slips during the summer and that low income youth fall further behind than their classmates," said James Armfield, MAM president. "We work to stop that trend by making academics a major part of our summer curriculum. Our thrust is to keep our youths' minds sharp and ready for the new school year."

For summer camp locations, fees, and more information, visit mamsports.org.