



Channel 5 Action News at 6:00 P.M. "Taking Back Our Neighborhoods" July 29, 2011

MEMPHIS, TN - (WMC-TV) - Neighborhood kids are lured into Memphis Athletic Ministries summer camps with the promise of hoops - and hope.

"We want to build relationships with these kids," said Robert Sumner, the organization's neighborhood director for the organization. "We want to give them relationships that are sometimes absent in their life."

Memphis Athletic Ministries works year round, but steps up big during the summer month with a camp.

"We get to implement social skills, life skills, and most importantly we get to introduce them to a relationship with Christ," he said.

And the kids want to be there.

"We play basketball a lot, learn about God, and get to meet new people," 13-year-old Darmain Brooks said.

"It gives me something positive to do," 13-year-old Nicole Hayes added. "If I was at home, I'd probably be sleeping or on the Playstation or doing something like that."

More than 5,000 inner city kids spend time at the camp and organization's after school programs, where they study. Many of the students take part in the learning academy so they retain what they've learned the previous year.

"We see kids that struggle academically," said Dominique McNear, a youth coordinator for the program. "Some of the kids are in high school now, and haven't been able to read this entire time."

Some of the kids struggle in their neighborhoods too--with high crime, drugs, and violence, and a home situation that's not ideal.

"They know that when they come in here, they can let their guard down, and know that we're going to accept them and care about them and we're going to expect from them," Sumner said. "We put a high expectation on them, so they can walk out of here knowing that somebody cares about me, and most of all, believes in me."

Memphis Athletic Ministries tries not to turn any children away, and many of the kids are able to attend the camps at little or no cost.

It will take money to run this operation; the group could use your donations. If you would like to give or to learn more, go to www.mamsports.org.

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