

ENID TRAVEL CELEBRATES 30 YEARS • RECAP OF 2019 • THE ENTREPRENEUR • BACON & BREWS

ETOWN

ENID'S LIFESTYLE

February / March 2020 \$3

ROB JOHNSON'S

KEEPING THE BEAT

THREE WISE MEN

MENTORING TODAY'S YOUTH

FOWLER'S RANGERS





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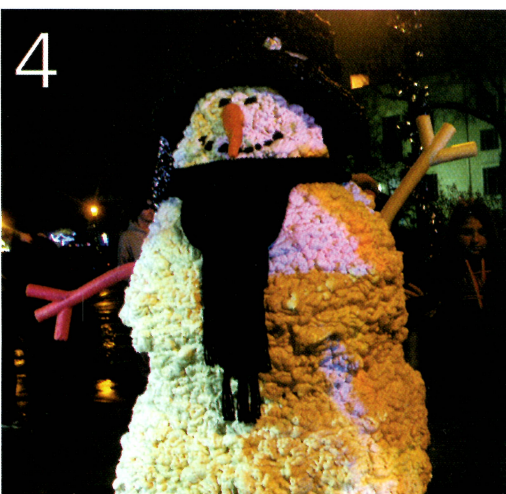
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Back Row left to right: Coaches - Coach Scooter, Larry Peterson, Coach Allen, Coach Henry, Johnny Rey Porter, Coach Awwali. Players: Collin Prado, Qa'im Butter, Tyron Clay, Traeton Botsford, Stryker Squire. Front Row: Christian Watts, Brett Nathan, Antonio Gonzalez, Castor Young, Isiah Carrillo and Aidan Young.

THE THREE WISE MEN

AWWALI IMMANI, SAM HILL AND JOHN GRAY
ARE BEARING GIFTS TO OUR YOUTH THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME



PICTURED AT TOP:
BABY INC. 3rd and 4th grade
2019 EJRT Football champions.

PICTURED ABOVE: B.A.B.Y., INC
Free Fades And Braids Tour hosted by
First Missionary Baptist Church in Enid.

BUILDING A BETTER YOU... BABY INC.

by Trina WALKER

Initially some kids were unsure about playing on an EJRT football team called BABY, Inc. Once they realized what BABY stood for they were all on board. BABY Inc. builds players to be a team and proud members of the community.

Building A Better You, is not just a football team. It is a community program developed by Johnnie Porter and Larry Peterson. Johnnie owns PJ's Family

Affair Salan, a local barber shop. He started the program to mentor young boys and provide free haircuts for veterans and youth. Offering the haircuts to kids started as a back-to-school reward encouraging kids to get good grades and be a positive influence in their home and community.

BABY Inc. is now a non-profit organization reaching deeper into the community. "Free Fade and Braids" is a year-round program at local churches and community centers offering free haircuts.

The program has grown to include sports. Athletics are a valuable tool giv-

ing area youth a purpose. From Football, Basketball and Cheerleading, BABY Inc. has expanded in order to better serve Enid youth.

Awwali Immani grew up having Johnnie cut his hair. Awwali wanted to help his community. This desire to work with youth led him to partner with longtime friend Johnnie. Awwali who had prior coaching experience was the perfect choice to bring on board coaching 2nd through 6th graders in EJRT football.

Awwali's 3rd and 4th grade BABY Inc. team fought their way to win the 2019 championship game.

"I will remember this group when I am old and in my rocking chair," he said.

Awwali is proud of how far his kids came. This pride goes deeper than just winning a championship.

"We teach responsibility and discipline. These kids must have good grades. My wife is a teacher and parents help with tutoring when needed," he said.

BABY Inc. helps kids in the community, many who may not have a father in the home or are from a split home. Whatever obstacle kids face, BABY Inc. is there as a support system for area families.

"We give an outlet to express. Kids don't always talk to parents about stuff that bothers them. We are a safe outlet for them," he said.

Through positive support and character building, this program is shaping the youth of Enid.

"Everyone does the right thing when people are watching but what are they doing when no one is watching?" asks Awwali. BABY Inc. is a support system to teach kids to do the right thing even when no one is watching.

To learn more about how BABY Inc. is helping the Enid community visit www.buildingabetteryou.team or go to Building a Better You - BABY, Inc. on Facebook and Twitter.



Left to Right: Pazlie Jones of Ringwood, Kathryn Plunkett of Garber, Jessica Corey of Chisholm, Jamie Nathan of Enid and guest player from Tulsa.

Helping Elevate Sportsmanship... H.E.S. Sports Club

by Trina WALKER

Who would ever imagine that a basketball program started by a military man while stationed in Germany would evolve into a youth program for athletes in Enid?

Sam Hill formed Helping Elevate Sportsmanship or H.E.S. Sports Club in 1995. His reputation was solidified while coaching abroad in Germany. After serving our country proudly in the Army, Sam and his wife, Pamela, who was from Enid, were ready to return to the States.

"I asked my wife what schools needed the most help so that is where I applied," he said.

Sam began working in schools and volunteered coaching for area teams. His passion for sports is more than just a love of the game. Sam believes 100 percent that the discipline and sportsmanship learned on the court or on the field builds character.

While basketball is Sam's first passion, H.E.S. offers kids opportunities to participate in many sports from track and field to puppy power sports including football, soccer and t-ball.

"It is all about the kids," says Sam. "Sports is just one tool in the tool belt. It is what bring us together but seeing kids interact in the community is what makes it great."

Part of Sam's success building H.E.S. is

because of the mentorship program. He believes this instills confidence and pride in his kids.

"There are no super stars," said Sam.

The mentorship program puts high school kids and elementary kids together working side by side.

"I'm not the only coach. Mentor kids sit on the bench with me. They get the opportunity to be the assistant coach," he said.

This is not just for older kids to help with younger teams. Sam will put third grade kids on his high school bench and ask them what plays should be run.

"When we see these kids away from the gym, they are family," he says.

Family is important at H.E.S. Sam is the coach, bus driver, all-around handy man. He is there to open the doors and lock-up at the end of the day but he is not alone. His wife and son are his team.

"I could not do this without Pamela's love and support," said Sam.

Sam beams with pride while taking about his son, Samuel Jr., a sophomore at Enid. Samuel has grown up in the program as a player and a mentor. He is learning to be a team player, coach and most importantly a role model for area youth.

Sam loves the kids and seeing them grow into strong, confident members of the community.

He motivates and pushes his kids to always remember their voice is the most

UNITED WAY COACH A KID

by Molly **ATHEY**



powerful thing they will ever have.

H.E.S. kids are built on the court but the true value of the program is seen around the community. Community outreach is an important part of building kids to reach their highest potential.

H.E.S kids are involved in the community by helping at Our DailyBread. Another outreach that as a Veteran Sam is particularly close to is Socks for Soldiers. Partnering with these outreach programs shows the kids the importance of giving back.

Not every kid is going to play in college or go pro. For athletes with that goal in mind Sam will train and mold giving them the best opportunity to move forward.

But Sam wants people to know there is a place at H.E.S. for all kids regardless of their athletic experience or ability.

"Just get in the gym," he says.

Sam will train each individual to the best of their ability. Everything Sam does is for the kids. It is their success that keeps him opening the doors everyday.

To learn how you can be a part of H.E.S. go to <http://www.hessportsclub.com>.



Jon Blankenship mentors a fifth-grade student at Coolidge Elementary School, as they play a checkers.
(Photo by Bonnie VCULEK)

With the first handshake, it is clear that John Gray, United Way's Coach A Kid Program Coordinator, has fresh new energy to bring to Enid. This energy, comprised of world experience, love of the community and faith in its children, creates infectious excitement for the Coach A Kid program. Through his description of its rewards, his energy inspires hope and possibility for its future.

Coach a Kid is sponsored by United Way of Enid and Northwest Oklahoma. Established in 2015 as a mentoring program servicing Enid Public Schools, this program pairs EPS students with mentors in the community in order to facilitate not only increased academic performance, but also positive interpersonal relationships between the student and an adult with a listening ear. In 2018, it partnered with Autry Technology Center in a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) project. This project integrates engineering, coding, robotic and science into kits which are then used as tools to introduce students to specific, unique fields of research. The goal is to create a spark

of interest that ignites fresh energy in the student's approach to his/her education.

John Gray joined Coach A Kid three years ago as the Program Coordinator. He was born in New Jersey but his family, which has roots in Enid as early as the 1890's, keeps his ties to our area strong. He brings world experience to our community through his work with Coach A Kid. Upon graduation from New York Institute of Technology, he spent time in Brooklyn where he felt at home in its rich diversity. He then spent time in Germany running at Italian restaurant. Through his studies at NYIT and his immersion into vast cultural experiences, he gleaned the value of human connection. He has integrated this value and his experience in Brooklyn into his work with Coach A Kid by focusing on creating relationships between mentors and mentees that foster mutual personal growth. He says it wasn't a deliberate decision but a spiritual pull that led to his position as Program Coordinator. He explains, "I was not drawn consciously to the Coach A Kid program. I call it the natural progression of my life. One might say

that Coach A Kid is one of the vehicles with which others can have generational impact on our community."

As Program Director, he is committed to ensuring that every child feels heard and appreciated. Within the process, he has found that the rewards of this program go not only to the student, but to the mentor as well. Many students had such positive experiences that they returned to Coach A Kid as mentors in order to "pay it forward". He related a story about a mentor so inspired by the relationships she built with her mentee and with her school counselor, she was asked to consider becoming a teacher.

Mr. Gray sees endless opportunities for Coach A Kid within our community. He stresses the importance of innovation and growth to fully utilize the breadth of its resources. Additional volunteers offer new ideas and inject fresh energy for further innovation. While he says volunteers are celebrated and essential in all capacities, he stresses the specifically pressing need for male mentors within Coach A Kid.

"Men have an obligation to show the way to every generation that follows them. 'The way' could be a kind word or a pat on the back. It could also be in showing how to use tools or showing kindness. It could also be by simply being there."

DESCRIBING AN EXPERIENCE THAT FIRST IMPRESSED UPON HIM THE IMPORTANCE OF MALE ROLE MODELS IN A YOUNG CHILD'S LIFE, HE SHARES A VERY PERSONAL STORY FROM HIS CHILDHOOD:

"I went fishing with my grandfather once. It was late and I stayed up for as long as long as I could. He told me to go lay down on a cot that he put up. I was in that stage of sleep where your eyes are closed but you're still aware of your surroundings. Granddaddy took a blanket, covered me up and tucked me in. I felt loved, protected and safe. I've never told anyone that story before. It's my favorite memory of my grandfather. This is why we need more men to mentor. Man must make his daily bread. He must learn how to succeed and care for himself and then his family. He must learn the ways of other men to gain wisdom and understanding. He must learn how to lead and then lead others. He must also learn

compassion and understand his duty and positively impact the life of others. If not, he is then not a man but only a male. For these reasons and more than I can count, we need more men to mentor."

Mr. Gray also relates the importance of accessing new resources through grants. Volunteers willing to assist in grant applications are essential to the future of Coach A Kid. Additional funding can increase its reach within the community and open possibilities for additional programs.

These are but two examples of ways to support and enrich the Coach A Kid program. Informational luncheons are offered throughout the year as an opportunity to

learn about Coach A Kid, what it has to offer and how to get involved. Those interested in learning more about Coach A Kid, or who wish to become involved as a volunteer or as a mentor, are encouraged to contact John Gray via email at john@unitedwayenid.org or phone at (580) 237-0821.



Coach A Kid Program Director, John Gray. (Photo by Bonnie VCULEK)