

around town: EVENT

THE WEEK of Champions

Positive role models host constructive clinics

With all the media attention regarding the apparent lack of moral character among some of today's professional athletes, many families are wondering: Where are the positive role models, the ones today's youth can proudly look up to? If you are wondering about where all the good guys and gals have gone, then look no further than our own community. The Week of Champions is a non-profit, Christian organization that brings professional Christian athletes together for one week each year to hold sports clinics for the young people in our area.

What started 25 years ago as a small gathering of five or six professional athletes and around 50 children has grown into a massive undertaking with 40 sports professionals and approximately 1,800 children projected to attend the event this year. It has become a happily anticipated annual island tradition for children and volunteers alike. Last year, 75 children from out of state attended the Week of Champions, and there are always a lot of "repeat customers," kids who come back year after year. For the children who attend from out of state, many spend their vacation week here with their families, so everyone in the family can have fun.

When asked why the organization exists, Gary Wetherington, director of the Week of Champions said, "It exists to teach young people to be champions in life." He proudly says this inspiring week is meant to help kids learn about living a wholesome, productive life, while having good, clean fun at the same time. During the various clinics, sports fundamentals are being taught, along with lessons in Christian character. Such lessons as saying "no" to drugs and "yes" to doing good things are taught, all in a positive atmosphere.

Wetherington is also proud of the support from the community. He says around 50 locals have been dedicated to giving faithful service, generously volunteering their time and energy to keep the program up and running. While he is thrilled about the support, Wetherington says he's always happy to recruit more volunteers.

The Week of Champions is open to all area boys and girls ages eight and up. All clinics are free. This year, clinics in football, soccer, tennis, golf, baseball, cheerleading, and basketball will be offered. Clinics will be held at various locations around the area, including Port Royal Racquet Club, Hilton Head Christian Academy, Basil Green Recreation Complex in Beaufort, and Jasper/Ridgeland Athletic Field in Ridgeland, among others.

The Week of Champions was the result of brainstorming by three Hilton Head Gator football coaches. They thought it would be a great idea to bring professional athletes to Hilton Head as positive role models for area youth. Greg Brezina of the Atlanta Falcons was instrumental in recruiting the athletes and is still involved in the organization today. Others who have been involved with the Week of Champions for many years include Thomas Norby, Ernest Marchetti, Bill Smoot, Cary Corbitt, Jimmy Baker,



MARY LOU BRASWELL, UGA CHEERLEADER



CHARLOTTE EAGLES SOCCER PLAYER



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