Hawkinsville Hoops League Mentors Young Men
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The Hawkinsville Hoops League is a non-profit basketball league created to instill leadership and other valuable life skills in young men ages 13-16. The league was founded by Jeff Tarver, Tyler Jenkins, and Nevin Shennett, members of Pulaski Tomorrow. Pulaski Tomorrow is a leadership development program established as a result of the Pulaski Archway Partnership’s priority of leadership development and based on the UGA Fanning Institute curriculum.

Basketball is used to attract the participants, but it also teaches these young men to respect their fellow teammates, promote sportsmanship, and work together for a common goal. The Hawkinsville Hoops League aspires to shift these young men’s focus to more positive alternatives to occupy their idle time during the summer months. The goal is to help instill a foundation to assist them in building towards a productive future.

The Archway Partnership has had a great impact on this program. Shennett said “The Hawkinsville Hoops League has been a monumental success. This has been thanks in great part to the help provided to my colleagues and myself by Michelle Elliott, the Pulaski Archway Professional. She has been a means of encouragement and a wonderful asset to our cause. From her extensive list of invaluable higher education contacts, to her ability to help our ideas come to fruition in a great way. Our vision would have not been possible without her wonderful contribution.”

The League was supported by Middle Georgia Technical College, Hawkinsville-Pulaski County Recreation Department, Pulaski County, Pulaski County Board of Education, Volunteer Macon and numerous other sponsors and partners. In its first year, the program grew to over 70 participants, and became a weekly family outing in the community. The boys learned many valuable life skills in a safe and fun environment.

Shennett also said “During these meetings we guided the youth through courses including literacy and mathematics, professional dress and etiquette, resume building, interview skills, importance of continuing education, making appropriate life decisions, and various other life skills. These individuals were divided into teams to compete against one another after classes were completed for the day. The program also received a great deal of community support in the form of donations and participation. For example, at multiple meetings we held contests in which parents of participants competed for prizes. These things led to the community welcoming the program with open arms and fully enjoying what was being offered and appreciating the improvements that were possible to make Pulaski County a better place for all.”

Jenkins said “Hawkinsville Hoops League has been a catalyst for positive change in the community. The young men who participated in the program not only exercised their muscles, but more importantly, exercised their minds, learning firsthand the importance of education, character, hard work, and integrity. Hawkinsville Hoops League believes that positive change is possible and people must stand up and take back their communities!”

The league ended its first season with championship games played in the brand new Middle Georgia Technical College (MGTC) gymnasium. The Knicks were named the first Hawkinsville Hoops League Champions. MGTC hosted a bus tour and lunch for the boys, provided shooting contest prizes, and the MGTC Titans coaches and players spent a great deal of time with the boys. The league is expected to be an annual event.

**Advancing Community Priorities:** One of Pulaski County’s top priorities is leadership development. This program gives young men the foundation to become productive members of society and to instill in them leadership skills.