



## **Camp delivers many lessons**

**Former NBA player with county ties teaches kids about basketball, life.** E-mail Terron Hampton at [thampton@gazette.net](mailto:thampton@gazette.net).

**Christopher Anderson / The Star**  
Former NBA player Jerrod Mustaf (left) works with local youth during his Take Charge Basketball Camp Tuesday at Forestville High. The camp pairs basketball with classes on teamwork, conflict resolution and other life skills.

Former National Basketball Association player and De Matha High School graduate Jerrod Mustaf has participated in basketball camps since he turned pro in 1990. But when he decided to start running his own camps three years ago, he

said he wanted the focus to be more than just on sports because the need for more clearly displays itself in many of the county's communities.

Now, in the third year of running his Take Charge Basketball and Life Skills Camp, Mustaf is starting to find ways to improve on his idea.

"So many kids in this county have behavioral and social issues," Mustaf said Tuesday afternoon as the campers at Forestville High School participated in basketball drills. "They need an outlet and sports is it. I wanted to have a life skills camp that was focused on character building."

Mustaf held the first session of the camp last week at the City of Bowie Gym before conducting this week's edition at Forestville High. But Mustaf did not come up with the idea on his own.

The Take Charge program began with Mustaf's father working as a bailiff for the Prince George's County District Court, where he said he frequently saw the county's youth showing up in courtrooms without the proper attitude, appearance and outlook on life.

Started in 1990, Take Charge is a nonprofit organization created by Mustaf's father and several high ranking judges in the county court system.

Mustaf understood that in order to help his camp's participants become more well-rounded individuals, more would be needed than just basketball or character building.

Mustaf exposes the camp's participants to many of the county's leaders in order to show them live examples of success. The Take Charge Basketball and Life Skills Camp presents at least one guest speaker per day in the week-long camp. Mustaf's aim was to expose the camp's participants to leaders in the community, not just in sports.

On Tuesday, Suitland High teacher Todd Mitchell gave a cultural presentation of African-American and Native-American history. Earlier in the camp's Tuesday session, representatives of the county's health department gave the campers tips on nutrition.

Mustaf said he invited the county's Young Business Minds organization to teach the participants about business savvy. The high school students on the camp's staff also benefit as Mustaf pairs them with college student-athletes and professional basketball players from around the world.

"I wanted to put the high school students in positions of leadership," Mustaf said. "They are responding in a positive manner to being in those positions and working with other people."

One of the camp's staff, Eleanor Roosevelt High student Noel Bullock, said she has learned a lot about college from the camp. "In this camp, it is teaching you about being a leader, and I learned how to act in a lot of different situations," Bullock said. "All of the speakers were very helpful in talking to us about the importance of grades and how hard work will pay off in the end," added Roosevelt sophomore David Abraham. "I'm learning to have patience, especially when it comes to kids."

Bowie High sophomore Tara Mustaf said she knows her father's motivation.

"He wants the campers to get involved in a lot of things in life and for them to try their best in the classroom and life."