

# The Star

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Christopher Anderson/The Star

Jamaal David, 9, of Clinton, prepares to shoot a basket during a free basketball and life skills camp at Forestville Military Academy on Monday.

## Life skills points given at basketball camp

by Tiffany Young

Staff Writer

Inside a Forestville school gym, a young basketball camper cants, "Guard your man," while on the court just minutes after his coach said to the team, "It is OK to make mistakes. Don't give up."

And outside on the blacktop during an innocent game of three-on-three, Baylin Deboch, 9, of Forestville scrambles to find his place on the court.

"I'm not good enough. I just want to play basketball," Deboch said, as he plops on the table.

At Take Charge Life Skills basketball camp, youngsters from around the

county, who have a passion for the sport are learning more about who they are through a life skills 101 clinic that teaches the necessary tools to become proactive adults.

This year, the camp partnered up with the County's Executive Office and Juvenile Services to provide a free week-long camp for youth ages six to 16. The camp ends Friday.

Jerrod Mustaf, vice president of Take Charge and the president of the Street Basketball Association, which has a few players participating in the camp as coaches, to help kids develop into adults.

Mustaf, a former NBA player with the Phoenix Suns and a native of the

county, began playing ball as a youngster. Through his own journey, he gained knowledge while on and off the court that contributed to his success as a man about business.

He said he wants to teach kids how they can become successful.

"With all of the crime and so much is going on, we wanted to do something positive and free for the kids," Mustaf said. "This is our time to give back and we are working hard at doing it."

The camp helps those who have the burning desire to play basketball and those who just like to dribble around once or twice. Each day a series of half

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court games and three-on-three techniques, all being taught by current professional and non-professional basketball players are incorporated in the camp.

Cabria Johnson, of Upper Marlboro joined the camp to play basketball. At the age of 14, Johnson is strong on the court, a skill that she admits to already knowing.

On Monday she worked on her fundamental skills and practiced shooting the ball.

"I am a good player but I want to do other things like be a lawyer, but this camp is cool, I know a few girls here," Johnson said.

Jerry Follot, one of the nine camp coaches and a basketball player at the University of Michigan, said the camp leaning towards life skills is ~~not for the kids~~



Christopher Anderson/The Star

Nickia Gibbs, 13, of Lanham practices her free throw as her coach Alex Jackson (left), 17, of Largo watches during a free basketball and life skills camp at Forestville Military Academy Monday.

He said while playing basketball in college he has to learn to believe in himself because often times others do not.

"I want them to always be confident and learn to trust themselves. If

they know they can play they should never let anyone tell them they can not," Follot said.

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