

Basketball league teaching youth more than hoops

Being involved in community, caring for others among lessons

By TODD BRYSLAK
Sun-Gazette Staff

The Kennedy-King Youth Basketball League wrapped up its second successful season Saturday night with an awards dinner at the Christian Life Center on Market Street.

Offering the nearly 100 youths involved in the league a positive perspective on their accomplishments and futures in the community, organizers and sponsors presented awards and words of encouragement during the banquet.

"You all have the opportunity to achieve, and to do what you need to do to achieve in life," said guest speaker Charles Daniels, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church.

"The things that you are doing now are the things that are shaping you for the future."

Daniels was just one of those emphasizing the need for the league's youth to move forward in life and while leaving behind a positive trail.

Kennedy-King League organizer Loni Gamble spoke of the youths' actions



Hoisting their trophies, members of the "Port Ballers" Division I champion team the Kennedy-King Youth Basketball League make clear their feelings during the league's awards banquet Saturday night.

NINA DELANEY-URBINA/Sun-Gazette Correspondent

on the court and in the community.

"Making the right choices in life is the key to a positive future," Gamble said.

This year's basketball season was a great success for the organizers, youth and the community, he added.

In addition to fielding eight teams in two divisions, the players, coaches and volunteers of the league participated in a

number of "community building" events in order to portray a positive image to those who view the area's youth as a problem.

"You are all winners. Don't let anyone tell you that you're not," Daniels added.

One of the newest endeavors set forth by league organizers and players will be a fund-raising campaign to assist a 19-year-old Philadelphia man who was recently shot and paralyzed when a group of men tried to steal his Allen Iverson basketball jersey, Gamble said.

Reflecting on the incident, Gamble added that all the youth should be leaders and make the right choices that have positive influences on those around them.

A number of area organizations were thanked for their help with the league.

Those recognized were the Williamsport Housing Authority — the league's sponsor — and the Williamsport-Lycoming Foundation, which provided \$10,000 to buy a scoreboard and bleachers.

All the teams involved were rewarded with trophies, including the two league champions: the Port Ballers, Division I, ages 11-13; and the Newberry Nets, Division II, ages 14-16.

Offering a comparison between basketball and life Daniels said:

"The game of life is achieving integrity, character, acknowledgement, self-esteem and self worth."