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## SPORTS

March 16, 2004

### BUILDING TOWARD THE FUTURE

by Mike Corey

For the children that have been involved with Hoop Dreams since the inaugural practice session in October 2003--and for the ever-growing number of new participants that have joined in recent months--their goals are quite simple. They are seeking out the normalcy that comes so easily to their peers that have not had to suffer through the unimaginable ordeals of childhood cancer. Through basketball, they have found sound instruction, companionship and a very good time. The dozen or so children currently enrolled in the program are having fun, and they're enjoying themselves in an all-encompassing atmosphere of goodwill and understanding.

Likewise, the goals of Hoop Dreams are simple, yet grand. "Where we are now is that we have secured the land which is at the crossroads of Martin Luther King Drive and South Roxboro," explains Dr. Henry Friedman, the renowned Duke pediatric oncologist whose vision resulted in Hoop Dreams. "And we are getting our donors and our investors lined up...to afford to build a free-standing gym, two and one-half courts, that will be used primarily for Hoop Dreams Basketball Academy not-for-profit activities. It will serve kids with medical problems, and to some degree with scholarships for kids with financial problems."

And by having its own facility, Hoop Dreams will be able to meet a growing demand of children that want to participate.

"We'd add more kids but it's currently hard to get gym time," says Mike Zeillmann, the coach who runs Hoop Dreams in donated space from the Duke Athletic Department, usually in the IM Building.

Hoop Dreams will remain a completely free program that will provide basketball instruction--and, consequently, life direction--for children who otherwise may have been unable to participate in organized athletics.

The facility will be running full-time, and will be administered by, among others, Nancy Butters, the wife of former Duke athletic director Tom Butters' son Bret. Zeillmann will be the athletic director.

"Once the facility is built, it's a full-time operation every day of the week," Friedman says. "It's going to be a central hub for basketball in this community for healthy children, but more importantly for children with medical problems and some with financial need."

There will be sessions for large blocks of kids; there will be individual sessions with Zeillmann; and there will also be training sessions for those without medical conditions who will pay for private practices. Those instances will not be the emphasis, however, for the Hoop Dreams Academy.


Basketball has become a form of therapy for the children who are at the foundation of Hoop Dreams. And though the new facility will be multifunctional, the program's original intent--to fulfill the dreams of children with cancer--will be complemented by varying participants from the Durham community, the superlative service Hoop Dreams provides will remain intact.



GRAPHIC IS SIMILAR TO THE PROPOSED HOOP DREAMS FACILITY, AND IS NOT AN IDENTICAL RENDERING/PROVIDED BY GURLITZ ARCHITECTS VIA MIKE ZEILLMANN. A Hoop Dreams facility is currently in the works for the corner of Martin Luther King Drive and South Roxboro in Durham, and will look similar to this design.

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"I would have to say that this kind of activity that they've gotten is probably not equal to the chemotherapy [many have received over the years], but it has substantially increased their level of emotional stability," Butters says.

But it goes so much further than emotional stability, which is what has served as a motivation for many members of the Duke community to pledge their time, money and support to the present and future of Hoop Dreams. "I think it's a wonderful program," says women's basketball star Lindsey Harding, who has spent time working with the children during Hoop Dreams sessions. "The kids were all really excited for me just being there."

And soon, those children--and many more--will have the chance to be excited all over again with peers who have the simplest yet most desirable of dreams: to be happy.

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