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At-risk Israeli youth meet NBA star, attend special basketball camp

By BEN BRESKY

Olympic gold medal winning basketball player Michael Redd met with at-risk youth in Jerusalem.



Basketball greets Tamir Goodman, left, and Michael Redd (right) conducting a basketball clinic for residents of World Emunah's Neve Landy Children's Village at the Jerusalem YMCA. (Photo by: YAEL COHENCA)

The residents of World Emunah's Neve Landy Children's Village in Even Shmuel, located close to the Gaza border, have experienced the trauma of rocket fire as well as difficult family backgrounds. Now they will be treated to a special basketball clinic headed by former NBA star Tamir Goodman which will kick off the Emunah All Star program.

The Jerusalem-based Goodman, who runs a basketball camp, stated, "the game of basketball has proven time and again to be a tremendous asset to children and young athletes to help improve their physical health as well as their mental and spiritual well-being."

An immigrant to Israel from the United States, Goodman was featured in Sports Illustrated as "the Jewish Jordan," a break-out high school star. He later played for a successful college team in America and Maccabi Tel-Aviv in Israel. He added, "I'm glad to

team up with World Emunah to help better the lives of their children through the game of basketball, both on and off the court."

A small group of children from the program were treated to a special event with Goodman and former NBA player and Olympic gold medalist Michael Redd a week and a half ago. Redd was originally scheduled to run the clinic with Goodman until last-minute scheduling changes.

Redd played professional basketball with the Milwaukee Bucks and won a gold medal as part of Team USA in the 2008 Olympics. He stated "I love being in Israel and being a part of the people. It is very special to be a part of the Emunah All Star program, knowing that I can make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged and at-risk Israeli youth."

Now the Neve Landy Children's Village will return to the Jerusalem YMCA for a full-day program for all 80 residents this June. The event is cosponsored by Israel365.

Southern Israel has frequently experienced rocket fire from the Hamas-controlled Gaza enclave and the residents of the village, located 25 km. from the border, have gotten used to sleeping in bomb shelters. The most recent barrage occurred at the beginning of May when over 700 rockets were shot into Israel killing four people.

"They are traumatized because of the situation after already being from traumatized backgrounds," Ruth Guggenheim, Resource Development Coordinator for World Emunah, told The Jerusalem Post.

She stated some of the children are orphans or were abandoned, and the launch of the sports camp is "an opportunity to just have a good time and build confidence."

She added that the aim of the program is to supplement the therapy and education they receive at the campus and give the children team-work skills so they can eventually grow up and lead productive lives.

Shlomo Kessel, Director of World Emunah, said the group is "grateful to all our partners who are making the Emunah All-Star program a reality. Their efforts will enable us to provide expanded physical fitness programs and quality sports activities which can play a major role in long term health and emotional healing."