

Sharon Stars reach for the sky

By Yoni Monat
SPECIAL TO THE ADVOCATE

While homework and cold weather put a damper on my winter Sundays, I always had one great activity awaiting.

What was that great activity? I volunteered at the Sharon Basketball Stars program, which gives children with disabilities the opportunity to learn about and play basketball.

The boys and girls were divided into two groups: ages 6-11 and 12-22.

I usually assisted Jonathan, a boy in the younger group, with dribbling, passing, and shooting. He improved both his basketball skills and self-esteem.

"It's good for some of the kids there who have some unfortunate problems," said fellow high school volunteer Joshua Englander. "Usually, they can't have an experience like this. It's great to give them that experience."

Englander assisted the older group, who played a supportive, non-competitive game of bas-

ketball. Each player was given several chances to make a basket.

Englander likened the volunteer experience to something resembling mentoring. He thought that it was well worth his while and would recommend that others volunteer.

It was amazing to see how much Jonathan improved each week with my assistance and his effort.

During the program's first few weeks, when Jonathan lost

control of the ball, he would not attempt to pick the ball up and try again. However, by the program's close, Jonathan would be persistent with dribbling. This was an amazing transformation.

Ms. Rounseville, the CHARMS teacher at Sharon High School, hears firsthand about the Sharon Stars program from her students. "The kids come in every Monday and talk about how their weekend was. That's always one of the highlights," she reports.

Ms. Rounseville also commented that while her students practice social skills in school, those skills are reinforced while playing sports. "It's just so good for them," she said.

The physical aspects are important, as well. "To do the work that they have to do [in school]," Ms. Rounseville added, "they need strength and they need endurance, and the

coordination parts. That does tie in nicely when they're doing sports."

Though the basketball season is over, the Sharon Stars program resumes on Sunday, April 11. Boys and girls ages 6-11 will be playing soccer, while the 12-22 year olds will play baseball.

The spring program will be held at Horizon's Field in Sharon from 1-2 p.m. on Sundays. Sign-ups are available at sharonrec.com, the Sharon Recreation Department website.

I know that when spring comes, homework will still be there, but so will a great experience of volunteering at the Sharon Stars program.

For more information about participating in the program, and to volunteer, please contact Katie Currul-Dykeman at csd41003@comcast.net.

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