

Get ready, Chicago.
The first and only wireless 4G network
from a national carrier is coming this fall.



FREE 3G/4G USB Modem U300
[Learn more](#)

Sprint

For your business account.
Two-year Agreement required.

Chicago Tribune

...ives > 2009 > April > 03 > Local

Archives Local
Archive for Friday, April 03, 2009

Garfield Park church takes to basketball court (and other venues) to build its team

Outreach includes hoops, job training

By Dawn Reiss

April 03, 2009

Rev. Michael Eaddy and his two sons came across a few guys playing basketball on a broken-down court in Garfield Park known as "The Hole" and challenged them to a game.

"The guys from the community began to laugh and doubt that we could play basketball at all," Eaddy's son, William, 33, said, recalling that day in July 2008 when he and his brother, Ephraim, helped pass out fliers in the Garfield Park neighborhood about their church, the People's Church of The Harvest.

The deal: Play the best two out of three. If the neighborhood players won, the church would throw a barbecue picnic for people in the community. But if the neighborhood guys lost, they had to go to church for a month.

"They laughed at my trash talking and told us they were looking forward to us cooking for the community," said William Eaddy, choir director at the church.

The church players won two out of three but threw the picnic anyway, and ended up getting even more people to attend services. A few, like Edmond Pryor, 28, have since joined the congregation.

"There are churches all over Chicago, but the difference is that most church[es] wait for people to come in their doors, the People's Church proactively goes out into the community," said Pryor, who was on the losing team that July and lives in Pilsen. He recently became the church's community outreach coordinator.

"To the untrained eye, this is just like any other ghetto in America," said Pryor. "Most people aren't gainfully employed; most pay \$30 a month in rent for public housing. But I grew up here, and we've always protected each other and looked out for each other. People who want to do better seek help, and the church is trying to facilitate that."

The church, located at 3570 W. 5th Ave. (near Central Park and Van Buren), is reaching out to its community and building membership at a time when many are seeing a decline. Michael Eaddy estimates the congregation has grown to 700 from about 450 in 2005.

"What stimulates our growth is our ever-evolving ministry," Eaddy said, adding that membership was around 200 when he joined 30 years ago. "Nothing is standard about what we do except that we come together on Sunday."

But he also acknowledges that the economic situation is playing a big role.

"More people are returning to church. They are grasping, clinging to their faith because of the economic landscape," he said. "People are faced with mortgage foreclosures, job loss, or are being cut back on their wages and they want to go somewhere they can get some help."

Recognizing that need, the church created a job-training program offered through its Community Development Association of Chicago. The program, called the Philemon Restoration Project, offers basic computer training or custodial and building maintenance with life skill training for ex-offenders and other job seekers.

The program is helping people like inmate Darius Duffie, 20, who is on a work-release program prior to his June 25 parole date.

"I was a street pharmacist," said Duffie, who started dealing drugs when he was 8 or 9 years old. "It was one-stop shopping with me."

But learning job skills will help him not make the same mistakes once he is paroled, he said.

"It's easy to find trouble and hard to find good," he said. "Especially when you don't have a job and you're searching for employment."

Related articles

- Chicago 2016 Olympics: Michael Jordan unlikely to be part of city's bid delegation Sep 10, 2009
- Tough queries unleash a terrifying alter ego Aug 09, 2009
- Gusts topping 50 mph rip through Chicago Oct 07, 2009
- Chicago childhood friends are honored for police and fire work Oct 07, 2009
- Chicago 2016 bid chairman says city did everything it could Oct 07, 2009

Related sections

- <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chicago>

More from Dawn Reiss

Copyright 2009 Chicago Tribune