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ANNE AND SCOTT DE RIDDER'S Y STORY

"I find it personally fulfilling and rewarding, knowing that the volunteer work I do helps the community." Anne and Scott de Ridder volunteer with Westside. They've coached for a total of 17 seasons spanning six years. Anne and Scott guided, supported and saw development in over 200 children in kindergarten–grade five. Their devotion to the Y stemmed from Anne suggesting one year that they get more involved in the community, so they did something new and purchased season tickets to the Portland Trail Blazers.

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They began attending as a family and started to follow basketball. As their son got older, he had participated in basketball classes with Tualatin Recreation, but Anne and Scott were looking to have him play on a team. They found out about the Westside YMCA recreational basketball league. That same season, Westside offered a spot to their son if they could coach the kindergarten league. "It became a family thing," since then the de Ridder's all go to basketball practice and games because someone is coaching or playing.

Scott and Anne were not involved with the Y until they became coaches, so they had no idea what to expect. "The Y is very well organized and incredibly supportive for the kids. For example, the way that other coaches, referees and Y staff work with the kids on sportsmanship and respect it will translate well to the classroom, any sport and life in general ... even calls from the referees are fun so the kids are not ashamed. They keep things even between more skilled and less skilled players, so that both sides learn and feel safe. This environment is very healthy and enriching."

Surprisingly, neither Scott nor Anne played very much basketball. Scott played sports in high school and college, but never basketball "The only basketball game I played was a scrimmage with the team I coach." Anne played a little bit of basketball when she was younger, but "I had to be motivated by my mother to do better defense. I would get prizes after I got a certain number of fouls in the game, because I wouldn't engage others."

Even though basketball was not their primary sport, Anne and Scott knew that the fundamentals of practice, training and sportsmanship are universal concepts. "At this age level, it is about reinforcing the basics and helping the kids put things together in the game."



Anne and Scott are both continual learners, as they find opportunities for the children to be engaged with different resources and tools.

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When moved up to coach second grade, Anne saw an ad for licensed basketball coaches through USA Basketball. She took the steps to further her coaching skills and became a licensed coach, and joined the Oregon Coaches Association. She convinced Scott to become licensed as well. The benefit from joining the OCA, is that they attend coaches' clinics to hear what others are doing and how they can apply that to Westside.

Scott and Anne also commend Westside's Sr. Director, David Parker on his efforts to create a coaches community. As first time coaches, Anne and Scott did not have to worry about the coordination or scheduling, David took care of it all. He provides resources like balls, cones, practice materials, and once even a sports physiologist to speak to the coaches. "As a volunteer, it was great to have that chance because we're not someone there to just watch over kids for an hour, there are more things we should be doing with the kids to keep them engaged."

Continued on the next page

One of the pieces that both Scott and Anne enjoy about the recreational league is that there is less competition—"you do not keep score officially." Anne notes that in some more competitive leagues the kids don't have as much fun. "The kids don't learn as much—the games are aggressive and everyone is focused on winning."

With Westside, she says that "our goals are not to win," but choose areas that the children can work on—like ball handling. "If we go into

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the game and we are mix-matched and miss baskets, but we have excellent ball handling, then we won. If we accomplish those goals as a team, then we know we are successful."

The de Ridder's see that there is more to the Y than just basketball. "It is not whether you win or not, it is if you improve or not. But we find ways to get the kids to grow in the skills they want—it might not be just winning."

Scott mentions his coaching style came from his high school coaches because they did the best they could with what they were given, similar to his experience with Westside. "You have to take the hand you are dealt and turn it into a fully functioning team, and learn to teach any skill level." Anne credits her parents' influence for her approach on life. She is continually developing as a coach, learning how to work with people. Her personal work ethic, beliefs and strengths come from what her parents instilled in her.

Scott and Anne are encouraged when they think of the future of Westside because "in the age of over-bearing sport parents,

emphasis on winning and competition, bullying and self-identity issues, it is great when you take something like basketball—that is very competitive and can be intimidating—to give kids who've never dribbled the ball before, they gain so much.

The opportunity to experience positive reinforcement, learn good sportsmanship, how to handle competition and challenges, how to be competitive and physical with someone else in a sports setting and then at the end of the game shake hands and deal with stress and challenges, is a fantastic environment." They provide the tools and reinforcement, but in the game, the kids are the ones doing it, and putting it all together. "It is rewarding to see their first basket, with everyone cheering and having fun. We give children a safe space to make mistakes, build confidence and succeed." A few years ago, the Y did a campaign on "Y do you give?" and Anne responded to that with to "help kids achieve personal victories." The de Ridder's think that some of the most rewarding pieces of coaching with Westside are when they see "kids who are incredibly shy, do not engage with the group, aren't coordinated, or have never dribbled—to get out of their shell and become more comfortable and experience something that they haven't. Helping them overcome challenges and learn important life lessons." Because Anne and Scott have followed some of their players into the next season or up to the next grade, they have been able to continue growing in the next season with these players.

"It's fun to see some of the players we've coached trying out for Hoop Elite—the competitive team. We always joke that one day we will see one of our players playing on a college or professional team."

The de Ridder's give so many children the opportunities to gain skills, and the confidence to continue onward in their sport journey. "I like to think that the kids will look back and remember a few nuggets of wisdom we taught them and take it with them, wherever they go."

We want to hear from you! How has the Y impacted you or your family's life?

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