



## BCI Action

BCI players and representatives, with Sharm and Kathy Scheuerman, returned to Alabama last weekend for the S.T.A.R.S. youth leadership and mentoring program, an exciting youth event in partnership with My Father's House Foundation, and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES). The event was developed by Rosalind James of ACES and Martha Bouyer of My Fathers House Foundation, and Greater Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church hosted us in Birmingham.

S.T.A.R.S. is related to the 2008 Boys to Men Summit in Dothan, Alabama, which we also attended. Our role deepened this year, as the spiritual aspect of the program was expanded.

The BCI Edge team included: T.J. Doyle, Mike Wilks, Zo Azubuike Terrance Crawford, Ernest Scott, Reed Rawlings, and Glen Whisby. Kelenna Azubuike of the NBA Golden State Warriors participated in many key activities as well, and Seth Franco - a former Harlem Globetrotter - warmed up the youth participants before every BCI Faith in Action breakout session.

On the first night, the youths were excited to watch DPB and Crew - Hip Hop for Christ and Youth, rappers who shared their faith and encouraged everyone to open up to the S.T.A.R.S. experience.

From Friday night's opening ceremonies to the charity basketball game (BCI Edge v. local all-stars) on Saturday night, young men and women and their parents – and mentors-in-training – were treated to a truly special community experience. Breakout sessions, three for each type of participant, included BCI's popular "Faith in Action" discussion, where professional players shared their personal experiences of life, athletics, and faith. Kelenna Azubuike spoke to the entire program on Saturday at noon, between sessions.

In our Faith in Action session, BCI players opened up with their own stories – personal, funny, and sometimes very serious. Then each player gathered with five or six youths for a smaller discussion. Here, the youths really opened up and talked about their challenges, asked questions, and supported each other. There was a lot of laughing and crying as the youths were overcome by the realization that this was a safe place to talk, and to ask for advice or help. Seeing a basketball hero stand before them, vulnerable and selfless, inspired trust among the youths. They understood, sometimes suddenly, that these players came to be with them for entirely selfless reasons. Their thanks for this came through loud and clear as they were challenged by BCI to be heroes themselves.

We heard a lot from the kids, who are not usually so open about their feelings. One young woman, whose sister participated in the program, walked two miles to S.T.A.R.S. just to make sure that her younger sister would get paired up with a mentor. When she addressed the



closing ceremony audience with her family's heartbreaking story, expressing her thanks for our "showing up," we were all so moved by her bravery, honesty, and gratitude.

While in Birmingham, BCI and company visited the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, a permanent exhibition affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution, and spent time in fellowship with each other.

"This weekend was really a great experience and I appreciate you for including me in it," said Ernest Scott, a BCI Edge player. "You guys were right about how much of an impact this weekend would have on my life. God's hand was definitely over the summit and the influence we had on the young people was well worth it. I would be glad to attend any future events like this that BCI is a part of."

The weekend, and certainly the event, was a huge success. Plans are being made to organize similar programs in major cities like Detroit and Chicago.

Many thanks to the organizations involved, and to every volunteer who helped make this event a success.

### Next Up

As BCI looks for more opportunities to impact young lives, we're getting ready to announce an exciting and youth-inclusive campaign this fall. We want to reach out to kids where they are, in schools and youth groups and sports programs, and inspire them with our players' integrity and faith. We feel we're in a unique position to show them how any life – theirs included – can be a positive influence. And that when you know you are living a life of worth, based on meaningful values and expressed with a positive attitude, you are as much a hero as any basketball star.