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New Gym, New Concept for Athletes Rising in Baltimore

BALTIMORE, Maryland – Can the future offer opportunity and success for Baltimore’s student athletes like it has in recent history? The founders of Leadership Through Athletics, Inc. say it can, but the focus needs to intensify and investors in our youth need to step forward.

Basketball and other athletic talent grows in Baltimore. It is nurtured by regional coaches and leaders of Maryland’s Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Chapter. The proof has been in the NCAA Men’s Basketball Final Four Tournaments the past two years.

In March 2002, Juan Dixon led the University of Maryland to a national championship, winning praise and Most Outstanding Player of the Tournament. Carmelo Anthony, another native and former local AAU competitor, followed Dixon to the limelight as a freshman at Syracuse University, also winning honors as Most Outstanding Player of the Tournament in 2003.

There is no shortage of talent, but there is a shortage of facilities to train and provide safe haven for today’s student athletes. Leadership Through Athletics is attempting to fill that void, at least in part, as it introduces a new concept in athletic training. The organization’s goal and current initiative is to erect Leadership Gym at 2900 Hammonds Ferry Road, near I-695 Beltway exit 9.

“We are hosting our Kickoff Fundraiser November 20th to raise awareness and money,” says LTA co-founder Michael Grace, an attorney and manager for Fountainhead Title Company. “We have a \$2.3 million project already under way and we need support.”

Grace, his brother Patrick, an executive with UPS, and Kent Politsch, president of Leadership Through Athletics, Inc., conceived of LTA in response to their needs as coaches and parents of athletes.

“We coach and manage an AAU club, the Maryland Sure Shots,” says Patrick Grace. “We know from experience that there is an extreme shortage of gyms, especially during the transition time between high school competition and the beginning of AAU season, which extends into summer.”

“We also know that developing athletes through competition is the best way to assure a new generation of leaders for our community and the businesses that thrive in our community,” he says.

“Leadership is not a subject normally taught in school, except on the athletic field where teamwork and structured discipline help make leaders of student athletes, both young men and young women,” says Politsch. “Our mission is to provide quality athletic facilities, coaching and the encouragement to lead. It stems from our belief that leadership is learned best while at play.

“Student athletes learn many life lessons when playing sports. Successful people in business, in politics, in the military and in other endeavors may not have been star athletes in their youth, but they participated and grew wiser because of their experience competing,” Politsch says. “Understanding the importance sports means to our children drives us to master the teaching of the game, which in turn, drives us to promote and expand Leadership Through Athletics and to build Leadership Gym.”

Assisting with LTA's mission is WBAL Radio's John Patti, a 30 year veteran of Baltimore media. Patti will join co-founders Michael Grace, Patrick Grace, Kent Politsch and the Leadership Through Athletics' board of directors at the organization's Kickoff Fundraiser, Thursday, November 20, 2003, at Town & Country Caterers, 2319 Hammonds Ferry Road, Lansdowne, Maryland. The event begins at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$100. Media professionals are invited as guests. RSVP requested.