

GOT A CLOSET FULL OF OLD ATHLETIC SHOES TO GIVE AWAY? *LOCAL YOUTH GROUP TO COLLECT SHOES FOR AFRICAN HOOPSTERS*

Arlington, Virginia – August 3, 2007 - Everyone has used athletic shoes that has some tread life in their closets.

Beyond the Hoop™, an Arlington-based non-profit youth organization has launched a drive to collect used basketball and other athletic type shoes for Hoops4Hope, (www.hoopsafrica.org), a not-for-profit organization that supports youth development in Zimbabwe and South Africa by working with schools, shelters, and community organizations. Many of the participants play sports in bare feet because of lack of footwear. Kenny Robinson, founder and executive director of Beyond the Hoop (www.beyondthehoop.org), said, "Hoops4Hope mirrors our organization so much. We too are trying to teach kids life skills, respect and responsibility using basketball as the teaching tool. This isn't about becoming a professional basketball player. It's giving the kids hope for success for their future.

Emily Pratt, a volunteer with Hoops4Hope, said, "We are always so happy to see new people and organizations join our efforts to provide shoes to our program participants; however, receiving help from an organization like Beyond the Hoop is especially wonderful because in every step of the process, from the first pair of shoes being collected in Arlington to the last pair being handed out in Harare or Cape Town, a young person's life is being changed for the better. As that is both Beyond the Hoop's and Hoops 4 Hope's ultimate goal, I don't think we could ask for a better situation."

Pratt added that donors are encouraged to put messages in the shoes bound for Africa. "It's a cool way to connect kids," she said.

Beyond the Hoop provides educational tools, such as tutors, to help students maintain grades. They are introduced to careers that can incorporate their love of the sport, such as journalism, law, personal training and accountancy.

While many of Beyond the Hoop's participants come from disadvantaged families, they are learning about people facing even greater challenges in Africa through Hoops4Hope. They hope to collect at least 150 pairs of shoes to send to Africa.

Donations of shoes may be made on **Sundays, until October 15 between 2:30 and 4:30 pm** at **Trinity Church, 5533 16th Street North, Arlington, VA.** (near Virginia Hospital Center) or the **Arlington YMCA, 3422 N. 13th Street, Arlington, VA.** Men's, boys, women and girls shoes will be accepted. They should be in reasonably good condition with some tread. That is, without holes, grass stains or missing shoelaces. Even shoes with cleats will be accepted for the Soccer4Hope program.

For more information, call Beyond the Hoop at (703) 533-9158 or email us at Beyondthehoop@aol.com.

Beyond the Hoop is an Arlington-based non-profit that helps youth achieve positive accomplishments both on and off the court. We emphasize hard work and academic achievement as a means to developing good character, responsibility and success. Basketball is the vehicle to focus participants on attributes that will develop a solid foundation they can draw upon throughout life.

No one is turned away because of an inability to pay, nor are they turned away because they don't have "Michael Jordan" qualities. We are inclusive. We only ask that our kids put the same effort into their studies as they do into their basketball. For those who have trouble with certain subjects, we provide a tutor --- free of charge if the student cannot pay.