



Sports Crusaders reaches young people for Christ

By Vicki Brown, *Associate Editor*

Last year, 239 children professed faith in Christ. Not in a revival or because of a church program. In fact, many of these new believers had rarely or never been inside a church building. The kids came to know Christ through something they love — sports.

They were among the 2,014 children and youth Sports Crusaders ministered to through 105 basketball, soccer, volleyball and cheerleading camps, working primarily through local churches.

Studies show that 90 percent of Americans play, watch, read about or listen to sports at least once per month. Seventy-five percent do at least once every week.

College basketball standout, longtime high school coach and former recreation minister Bobby Shows began Sports Crusaders in 1994 while serving with the Missouri Baptist Convention. That year, a team of five college students led nine church camps, ministering to 300 campers. In 2001, Shows left MBC employ and moved the ministry base to Holts Summit.

During the weeklong camps, teams of college students teach the fundamentals of a sport. Each day includes a devotion that often



centers on a well-known sports personality's testimony. Leaders also watch for opportunities to share their faith as they share their athletic skills.

Campers' parents and family are invited to attend the awards ceremony held the last 30 minutes



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of every camp. All campers receive a T-shirt, a sports Bible and a certificate of participation.

Camps are held mostly through local churches. The ministry leads camps across the Midwest, including Missouri, Illinois, Kansas, Iowa and Arkansas. Teams also have ministered in Texas, California, Florida, Oklahoma and Tennessee. And they have served overseas — the past seven summers in Canada. Teams have done camps in Mexico, and will serve this summer in El Salvador.

In addition, teams have done sports camps as part of an associational children's camp, and for a girls' home, a boys' ranch, a police athletic center and several inner-city ministries.

Staffers also want to train more churches and individuals in sports evangelism.

Sports Crusaders ministers through a weekly radio show aired on KJSL AM 630 in St. Louis and streamed on its Web site.

Since 2001, the ministry has relied on gifts to operate, and each employee raises his or her own support. A popular fundraiser has been the St. Louis Cardinals Sports Crusaders Day at Busch Stadium. The Cardinals allow the ministry to sell hundreds of tickets and retain a portion of the proceeds.

Interested individuals and churches can learn more on the Web site (www.sportscrusaders.org) or by calling the office at 573-896-6095.



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