



Tribune & Georgian

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2012

Midweek



NATHANIEL "BIG EASY" Lofton twirls a basketball on his finger Friday as he leads the rest of his Harlem Globetrotters teammates toward the new basketball court at The Methodist Home for Children and Youth in St. Marys. The team surprised the boys and played a game with them during a dedication ceremony held Friday afternoon for their court. (Tribune & Georgian photo/Mark Beavers)

Globetrotters help boys home break in new court

By MARK BEAVERS
Tribune & Georgian Staff

What the 11 boys living at The Methodist Home for Children and Youth, a group home in St. Marys, were expecting Friday were rolling "Lovetown, USA" cameras capturing the dedication ceremony for their new full basketball court, built through donated services and funds raised by the home's summer fish fry.

What they didn't expect was playing their first game on the court against members of the Harlem Globetrotters, the world's most famous exhibition basketball team.

But that is exactly what

"This will just be one of those stories I'll tell to my kids when I get older."

Charief Culberson
Boys home resident

happened as a blue, red and yellow bus pulled into the home's drive and the traditional orange basketball was set aside as Globetrotter Nathaniel "Big Easy" Lofton, spinning a red,

white and blue basketball on his fingertip, led his teammates onto the new court, where the surprised boys were waiting.

"My mouth was wide open basically," said boys home resident Charief Culberson, 17. "I'll just remember when I was a kid that I got to play against the Harlem Globetrotters. This will just be one of those stories I'll tell to my kids when I get older."

The Globetrotters showed off some ball tricks to those gathered for the dedication before playing a game with the boys, whose

See **PLAY**, page 6A



Play: Businesses donated to construct court

■ continued from 1A

ages range from 12 to 19, talking to them about maintaining a positive attitude and signing balls and other gear for them.

Globetrotter Will “Bull” Bullard spoke with the boys about his time in foster care as a teenager and how he did not let his hardships keep him from achieving his goals.

“You got to stay positive with anything you do,” Bullard said, noting the boys are in a good place now.

The boys also headed down to Jacksonville, Fla., Friday night to watch the Globetrotters’ game.

Devon Loggins, regional director of The Methodist Home for Children and Youth, said that, while thousands went to the Globetrotters game, the boys at the Methodist home got a chance to have a personal experience with the team.

“For our boys, who have had so many losses in their

lives, now they have something special that was just for them,” he said.

The new court project that led to Friday’s dedication began after the basketball goal at the boys home broke last summer, and the home’s auxiliary board decided to raise funds for a court, Loggins said.

Court builder W.H. Gross Construction obtained donated materials from Lowe’s and reduced-price services from Waycross Paving, East Coast Concrete, Towers Concrete, and Stone and More.

Auxiliary board member Linda O’Shaughnessy, who is also part of the “Lovetown, USA” volunteer team, brought the project to the attention of the show’s producers, Loggins said.

“They became excited and said they would like to come out and film the project,” Loggins said.

“Lovetown, USA,” is an upcoming documentary-style reality show about the com-

munity and individual love currently being filmed by BBC Worldwide Productions in Camden for Oprah Winfrey Network.

“My office started to fill up with basketballs ... and jerseys,” Loggins said, noting “Lovetown” producer Liz Brunwin helped connect the gear donors with the home.

Loggins said he and the boys are grateful for the support from the community and “Lovetown” during the basketball court construction project, but noted community support is no stranger to the Methodist home.

“We’re aware that God has been working through people in the community since we opened our doors in 2002,” Loggins said. “It makes me feel blessed to be part of something that is bigger than all of us.”

Contact reporter Mark Beavers at (912) 882-4927 or mark@tribune-georgian.com



RESIDENTS OF THE Methodist Home for Children and Youth in St. Marys react as members of the Harlem Globetrotters step off their tour bus Friday. The exhibition basketball team helped dedicate a new basketball court at the home. Camera crews from “Lovetown, USA” filmed the event. (Tribune & Georgian photo/Mark Beavers)

Free tax preparation open