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Allan Houston "Father Knows Best" Basketball Retreat



After a shooting drill during Allan Houston's father son basketball retreat at Riverbank State Park in Harlem, the counselors gave the boys ten minutes of free playing time. Some boys gathered at a lowered rim for a dunk contest. As each boy dunked, the NBA star that they admired most shone evident. One boy put his whole arm in the hoop like Vince Carter, and another did a one-hand stuff without touching the rim, LeBron James style. Still with each attempt, the boys smiled and sought the approval of the ultimate recipient of their admiration, their fathers.



These genuine moments sparked throughout Allan Houston's fourth annual Father Knows Best basketball retreat on August 26th. Sponsored by Sprint, Metropolitan Grapevine, the event hosted well over one hundred fathers, sons, mentors, and mentees. The participants gathered at Riverbank's Cultural Center and Indoor Gymnasium, where they worked on proper shooting technique, won free jerseys, and attended panel discussions with Allan Houston, Ben Gordon of the Chicago Bulls, Allan's dad Wade Houston.



"I wanted to make sure the fathers and sons learn basketball fundamentals and skills, and I also wanted to understand the spiritual significance of their relationship," says Houston, the retired NBA All Star, who was hanging out with the boys, fielding questions like, "How do you make all those three pointers?" and "Which style do you like better, NBA style or And 1 style?" He also brought his spirited son Allan, 6, along for the day's festivities. Yet, with all the turkey sandwiches and knockout competitions that participants enjoyed, the biggest reward for the youngsters was a fun day out with pops.

"I grew up in a house full of women," Ben Gordon said during the panel discussion, "so I had to learn how to be a man on my own."



The statistics are hauntingly familiar. 50% of African-American boys live in households without fathers and 40% of those households are below the poverty line. Houston, who is contemplating returning to the NBA with a championship contender, has been working more closely with his father and his non-profit organization, the Allan Houston Legacy Foundation to expand the Father Knows Best program to Washington, Atlanta, and Louisville. They are not claiming to solve a national problem with this one-day event, but want their program to reach as many folks as possible.



"It may not happen in one day there," says Coach Wade Houston. "But we're just trying to all give some things that the fathers can take with them and sons can remember."

By **Sidik Fafana**