

COMMUNITY SPORTS

Coaching kids for sports and for life

Greenville Hurricanes' Mike Worley helps homeschoolers hone skills on field

By Donna Isbell Walker
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Kids who are home-schooled or attend private school don't always have the chance to make a touchdown or spike a volleyball against an opponent from another school.

But Mike Worley wants to give them that opportunity. He is athletic director of the Greenville Hurricanes, a program sponsored by the Upstate Homeschool Co-Op. The program fields teams in football, volleyball, soccer and basketball.

Worley hails from North Carolina, and he was part of a similar program in Hendersonville.

"Our children are involved in home school, and at the time I didn't have any children who were old enough to participate," says Worley, who also works as medical fitness program director for St. Francis HealThy Self. "But I saw that there was a need, and I really enjoyed the athletic atmosphere and the impact you can have on kids."

Worley has some experience in the world of sports. He played football in high school, but an injury prevented him from continuing it in college. Worley ended up throwing javelin at Appalachian State University.

"I love sports and I love athletics, and I love the discipline and the joy you get out of playing sports," says Worley.

About 150 kids participate in sports through the Hurricanes, although Worley expects a few more in the fall. The Hurricanes recently added tackle football in both the varsity and junior varsity



Mike Worley is athletic director of the Greenville Hurricanes. DONNA ISBELL WALKER/STAFF

levels to their sports roster.

While they're affiliated with the Upstate Homeschool Co-op, the teams are also open to students at private or charter schools that do not have athletic programs, Worley says. They compete against teams from private and charter schools and home-school organizations.

Students who play for the Hurricanes must be "students first," meaning

they have to maintain their grades in order to participate. They don't compete in sports during the summer months, but spend the time training in football and volleyball, he says.

Worley has five children himself, but this will be the first year one of his kids will be old enough to play on a Hurricanes team. His eldest child, 12-year-old Rachel, will play soccer, he says.

It's important to give

every kid the chance to participate in sports, says Worley, who spent three years as a coach at Georgia Tech.

Athletics, he says, "brings a nice balance to the equation. You want a child who's balanced and not socially inept."

It's also a bonding experience for kids and a chance to form lifelong friendships, he says.

"There are a lot of unspoken rules in athletics," Worley says. "It really is a

universal language."

He is especially proud of the four home-school students who recently received athletic scholarships due at least in part to their participation in the Hurricanes. It's a rewarding experience to see the growth experienced by a kid who is developing his or her talent in sports.

"As you're coaching, you see them overcome obstacles, and it's relevant to the game of life."

PROFILE

Name: Mike Worley, athletic director of Greenville Hurricanes
Occupation: Medical fitness program director for St. Francis HealThy Self
Family: Wife Rebekah, children Rachel, Eli, Emma, Leah and Brooklyn