



DEKALB COUNTY BRIARCLIFF

Globe Academy expands school’s athletic offerings

Sports develops skills not found in books, athletic director says.

By **H.M. Cauley**
For the AJC

Not all learning takes place in the confines of a classroom. Melissa Lewis, the athletic director at The Globe Academy Charter School near Atlanta, says sports are a way to develop skills not always found in a textbook. “Any sport enhances a student,” said Lewis, who is in her second year at the DeKalb school. “We want to offer an opportunity for anyone who wants to participate.” In her short tenure, Lewis has expanded the school’s athletic offerings from seven teams to 22. The school of 1,100 in grades kindergarten through eighth now fields middle grade teams in cross country, tennis and flag football, to name a few, and Lewis wants to add ultimate Frisbee next year. The newest crew is the swim team that launched in late October. Having a swim team not only expanded the school’s athletic offerings but also gets students involved in a physical activity they can do long after graduating. “We saw adding swim as a way to do that,” said Lewis. “It’s not only something they

» **MAKING THE GRADE** «

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can do for the rest of their lives; it also builds self-esteem during critical middle school years. And it’s very inclusive: It reaches many nontraditional athletes, letting those who might not participate in traditional sports be part of a team and experience what all the others do.” Lewis tapped volunteer Liz Cowhey to lead the team. The former high school competitive swimmer has taught swimming for years, but Globe is her first coaching gig, a role she was excited to take on as a way to give back to the sport. “This is a great opportunity for me and a great opportunity for the kids to meet new groups of students,” she said. “In a few weeks, the team has gotten much closer. It’s given them a new sense of community. At the same time, being part

of a sport enhances the confidence of those doing it for the first time and builds leadership skills among those who have a lot of experience.” All the 27 boys and girls who tried out for the team made the cut. Most had experience swimming on neighborhood and community teams, said Lewis, but they’re still required to practice every Wednesday night. The new team has also been an exciting surprise, said Lewis. “Since we began practicing Oct. 31, we’ve had two competitions and took first place in both. Little did we know they’d be so successful.” Having a dynamic sports program offers students more than a way to showcase their athletic prowess, said Lewis. “I’ve been involved with high school athletics for 20 years, but when I came to Globe and saw these kids being fully immersed in learning other languages and being so self-motivated and directed, I knew they need something to do with all that energy. We have a wonderful administration that’s been 200% supportive. And Globe is special in that we have a large number of kids who want to participate.” Information about The Globe Academy is online at theglobeacademy.org.

GWINNETT COUNTY PEACHTREE CORNERS



Revved Up Kids provides a spectrum of prevention training programs with a goal of protecting children of all ages from sexual abuse. At a public RUK workshop in Marietta, trainer Susan Liebert works on basic self-defense moves with a boy. COURTESY

Mom’s dream turns into plan to keep kids safe

Revved Up Kids enlists parents to fight sexual abuse.

By **Kathryn Kickliter**
For the AJC

Everyone dreams. Not all dreams are remembered, but then stay-at-home mom Allie Neal recalls her 2009 dream clear as day. The unemployment recession had hit the Neal family, and while she turned to prayer for guidance, her prayers were met with silence, she said. For nearly five months, Neal said, “‘God, you know I am not a patient person, and I’ve been really patient. I need answers, and I need them now.’ That’s when I had this very vivid experience like you read about in the Old Testament, where God is talking to or calling on somebody unlikely to do something that needs to be done. “I was sitting across the room from this person I knew to be God. God was saying, ‘You’ve been asking, and here’s my answer. This is what I need you to do, here is how you are going to do it, and here is who you are going to serve, what it looks like,’ and I woke up the next morning with every single bit of it,” she recounted. Despite having no personal experience or frame of reference, Neal co-founded Revved Up Kids, honoring the “Old Testament revelation dream” backed by God’s provisions working to prevent sexual abuse. Neal said, “The average

» **DOING GOOD** «

Each Sunday we write about a deserving person or charity events such as fun runs, volunteer projects and other community gatherings that benefit a good cause. To submit a story for us to cover, send to ajc.doinggood@gmail.com.

age of a victim of sexual abuse is 8 years old. Your child is never too young to have this conversation.” Moreover, she said, “more than 90% of the time the victim knows their abuser.” The nonprofit mostly serves the 13 counties of metro Atlanta, with a large percentage of the work done in Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton and Gwinnett. Over 20 programs are offered through in-person, online, virtual and video presentations. The co-founder and executive director said they have trained almost 40,000 youths since 2010. The nonprofit provides children as young as 5 years old, teens and various youth organizations – including neighborhoods – with age-appropriate training programs designed to empower the youths to identify sexual predators and dangerous situations. Examples of the subject matter for elementary school-age kids include unsafe people, how to create a strong personal boundary; ability to say no; using their voices; what to do if

they are actually grabbed; and the lies: tricky, trouble and scary, she said. “The middle schoolers and teenagers have a very different set of dangers, and also predators are approaching them in a different way,” Neal said. “Our training for them is about understanding their risk ... and we have different sessions.” For parents and caregivers, Revved Up Kids offers two seminars. Offered at no charge for a group of at least 15 adults, the first course discusses child safety tips for parents of children up to middle school. The second, “Social Savvy for Parents,” addresses five danger zones in the online world. “We partner with PTAs, and work with the Roswell and Decatur police departments to host training for the public, and are working to “replicate those police partnerships with other parts of town,” she said. As a tenet of their nonprofit, at least one group is trained free each time a group pays tuition for a program. “The work that we are doing is really important and valuable for all of us ... because sexual abuse is just this ripple across everything. It’s this unseen plague. We can’t pretend this doesn’t exist,” the co-founder said. “We need to get comfortable talking about it with our children, and we need to make sure that they are safe.” For details about Revved Up Kids or its upcoming fundraiser, Shamrock ‘n’ Roll, visit revvedupkids.org.



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The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

CLAYTON COUNTY

Ossoff announces nearly \$500K in aid for local Latino families

By **Lautaro Grinspan**
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An initiative that provides social services to Latino families in Clayton County is set to receive a \$492,000 windfall. The cash infusion comes from the hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding that have been allocated to Georgia via earmarks for the fiscal year 2023 – part of the \$1.7 trillion omnibus spending bill signed into law late last month. The grant to Ser Familia, a Latino-serving metro Atlanta nonprofit, is part of a \$88.1 million package of earmarks for local projects requested by Georgia U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff. “This is a historic day for Clayton County, and this is a historic day for Georgia’s

Hispanic community,” Ossoff said during a news conference Wednesday announcing the grant. “I have said since I took office that my goal is to be the most visible, the most effective, the most responsive federal representative that Georgia’s Hispanic community has ever had. ... Every community in Georgia deserves effective representation in the U.S. Senate.” Specifically, the money secured for Ser Familia will be used to buttress the nonprofit’s Family Resource Center in College Park. Developed in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services, the resource center helps connect Latino families with a host of social services, including emergency finan-

cial assistance, food access, youth programs and services for domestic violence victims. Staffers also help eligible families sign up for Medicaid and food stamps. According to Ser Familia, the goal of the initiative is to help families access the social safety net and prevent potential child neglect. There are two additional resource centers outside of College Park – one in Suwanee and one in Norcross – both of which also provide after school tutoring.

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