

Mt. Zion Evangelizes Through Basketball

“We believe that this is a great way to witness, seeing that it affords us an opportunity to share the values of a drug-free lifestyle with the community,” stated Maxwell Berkel, pastor of Mt. Zion Church, Kissimmee, Fla., during the Midnight Basketball grand opening service that was held on January 24, 2009.

Officially known as the Arthur Jackson Midnight Basketball of Florida, the Mt. Zion Midnight Basketball initiative will be held every Sunday, 4-8 p.m. The

program is the result of a partnership with Mt. Zion and The Center for Drug-Free Living, Inc.

Attending the grand opening was Michael Lewis, director of the Center for Drug-Free Living, Inc., Vincent Carter Sr., father of NBA great Vince Carter; and Lawrence Smith, a member of the CFDL Board of Directors.

The Center for Drug-Free Living, Inc., is the parent company of Arthur Jackson’s Midnight Basketball, which has been

night Basketball was all about. In addition to providing a safe environment to play basketball, the program features an education segment that is designed to provide life skills training, and aid in over-



Michael Lewis (left), Maxwell Berkel, and Vincent Carter Sr. display the Midnight Basketball banner that will hang in the Mt. Zion gym.

motivating, giving, and touching the lives of many communities for 19 years.

“More than just a game,” Carter stated as he explained what Mid-

coming the negative pressures of the world today.

Donald Williams, site supervisor, presented the initial education segment of the program on the topic “Health and Disasters.” He presented tips on how to be mentally and physically prepared for environmental disasters.

Hurricane preparedness was brought up as an example, an area in which

many are guilty of procrastination. “I think with this program we can reach out to others, and that’s the main purpose behind it all,” stated 17-year-old Mt. Zion member Courtney Hunt. “I am proud to be a part of this event that allows many lives to be brought to God through fellowship and encouragement from our church members.”

—BY KRISTOPHER BRICE



Young men from the community play basketball during the grand opening of Midnight Basketball.

More Than 1,000 Attend Officers’ Training

“At its zenith, every church begins to decline,” Fredrick Russell, president of the Allegheny West Conference, told the more than 1,000 local church officers who attended the eighth annual Southeastern Conference Leadership Summit in Orlando, Fla., February 12-14, 2010.

Russell explained, “Unless a church undergoes a period of regeneration during its decline, it will die.” He cited a report compiled

by the North American Division, that states in less than 10 years, 50 percent of the churches in North America will close their doors.

This regeneration period includes an in-depth reevaluation of the churches, community, and a retooling of its evangelistic methods.

The Summit featured more than 30 ministry tracks, and for the first time conducted tracks in French and Spanish.

Prior to the 2010 Summit, both language groups held their officer training events during different times of the year.

“Consolidating the training events brought Southeastern together and enabled us to utilize Conference resources better,” said Hubert Morel, Southeastern president. The next leadership summit is scheduled for the weekend of December 9-11, 2011.

—BY ROBERT HENLEY



Fredrick Russell, Allegheny West Conference president, outlines how declining churches can begin to thrive again.