



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Chess program at the Y expands

Greensboro, N.C., September 10, 2010 – Fifteen children ages 8 through 15 stare in total concentration at the checkered boards in front of them. The room is quiet as each child thinks long and hard before moving a single piece. Checkers, you ask? No, not checkers. It's chess, the newest program at the Spears Y.

The Ys chess program was brought to the Spears branch by Dr. Joseph L. Graves, Jr. Dr. Graves is associate dean for research, Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering, at North Carolina A&T State University and UNC Greensboro. Dr. Graves is an internationally known scientist and a life-long chess player and instructor. The United States Chess Federation rates him with over 500 wins in competitive tournaments in his chess career. Dr. Graves learned to play chess as a young man and wanted to bring his expertise to today's youth.

"The chess program at the Spears YMCA is a logical extension of the work we have been doing with children in Greensboro over the last five years," stated Graves. "I began teaching chess at the Hayes-Taylor YMCA and had good success developing some competitive scholastic players. However it is important to expand that effort. It is likely that Greensboro will again host the North Carolina Scholastic Championship in 2011. Recently this event has been dominated by teams/players from Charlotte, Raleigh, and Durham. Given the intellectual talent we have in Greensboro, there is no reason why we can't compete with teams from these cities. I see the Spears program as a key element in moving Greensboro youth chess to a level where we can vie for the state championship," he furthered.

Joe Hennigan, executive director at the Spears Family Y, said he learned to play chess at the Y as a youth. Chess teaches children about long term planning versus "in the moment" action. A child must learn to think ahead when playing chess, which is not a skill they necessarily learn while playing other games and sports. Chess also helps to improve memory and reasoning in children. Children that participate in chess have shown improved test scores and grades.

Mac Sims, a lifetime YMCA board member, says that chess helps with analytical and reasoning skills as well as mathematical problem solving. Sims, along with fellow Y board member and chair Dennis Sterns, started the chess program at the Hayes Taylor Memorial YMCA in 2000. Children between 7 and 17 have been

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learning this challenging game for the last ten years at that Y. It still meets there weekly on Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.

This season, Dr Graves wanted to expand the program to the Spears Y. At Spears, the chess program meets on Mondays at 6:00 p.m. and is for children aged 8 through 15.

Both programs are in need of volunteer coaches. If you are interested in helping, please contact either the Spears Y at 336.387.9622 or the Hayes Taylor Y at 336.272.2131.

the Y

The mission of the YMCA of Greensboro is to put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. The Y is leading the way as the nation's leading non-profit committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social development.

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