

“For the Best”

The Westword takes a look at the history and impact of Stamford’s Basketball Rec League.

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Walking inside the Stamford Boys and Girls Club on a Monday or Thursday night past six o’clock, take a left past the row of children waiting for their rides home beside the front desk and head into the blue basketball gym. Inside, about fifty teens are either watching or playing in the hottest recreational basketball league in Stamford right now.

The Stamford Rec Basketball League is the only basketball league in the city that specifically caters to teens. For only \$55 dollars and five minutes on a Google Form, kids from around Stamford are able to play 5v5 basketball games after school with their friends.

The League offers an aspect of freedom that players, like Mohammed Shaik (‘25), say make it a more attractive option for students like himself over the school basketball team. Students are able to go home, work jobs, or do other household chores before the start of the 6 o’clock playtime window that the Rec League operates in, making it a more flexible schedule for students who simply want to play “for the love of the game,” as Shaik said.

“The League, I think, is for the best,” Shaik said, referring both to the cultural impact the League has had on the city’s teen population and the skill level needed to compete in it.

The League also blurs the line of school rivalry traditionally found in Stamford Public Schools athletics, with students of both Westhill and Stamford High playing with and against

each other.

Depending on the team, students like Alistair Allen (‘25) believe the League caters more to individual than team-centric basketball, making it a better option for those who want to hoop competitively but who don’t want to worry about team cohesion and coordination.

The Stamford Rec Basketball League was the brainchild of two Westhill alums, one of whom graduated from the Hill at the same time that the other had just been born. Steve Basquiat (‘07), a counselor at the Boys and Girls Club, and Jake Davidson (‘24), a then-Junior, used to play in the same recreational basketball league — one which Basquiat said was “pretty expensive and kind of falling apart.”

After that league shut down in 2022, Basquiat and Davidson each branched off to form their own separate leagues, so they could continue to ball with their friends. But, after overhearing Davidson speaking to a friend about the struggles with running his own league, Basquiat told Davidson that he might have a plan.

“I saw Jake and some of his friends outside while my games were going on,” Basquiat said. “I told him, ‘Hey, you can bring your team in and play some games,’” and the rest, he said, was history.

The League quickly went from two teams to 12, and this year, Basquiat said they plan on having up to 19 teams by the end of the season.



ARMANDO QUITO (‘25) dribbles the basketball on Monday, January 23. Photo by Elmer Parades (‘25).



KENELM RIDDICK ('25) attempts a layup on Thursday, January 27. Photo by Elmer Parades ('25).



SANTIAGO VILCHEZ MONCADA (25') shoots a 3-pointer on Monday, January 23. Photo by Elmer Parades ('25).

Basquiat said that the goal of the Club's partnership with the Rec League is to make it a permanent fixture as one of the Club's primary teen programs — one that will not only last, but hopefully expand — allowing the Club to adapt to the ever-changing needs of its teen members.

"We want to make sure we always offer something for the kids to be doing," Basquiat said, "and if basketball is the activity that a lot [of them] want to be involved with, then that's something we want to focus on and get the word out to as many kids as possible."

Basquiat's interest in continuing partnership with the League proves to be beneficial to kids around the Boys and Girls Club.

"That's exactly the reason why we thought it would be the perfect collaboration," Basquiat said. "There's a bunch of other programs that we offer that we were able to get out to a bunch of kids."

According to Basquiat and Keenan Hardy, fellow Club counselor and Rec League referee, teen attendance has increased at the Club even during non-Rec League hours, which is a metric the Club had been struggling to

increase for some time. Hardy said the Club had difficulty "getting more of the older kids in here instead of on the street just doing nothing, especially around this time," — referring to the 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. window that the League operates in — but that the Club's partnership with the Rec League had "benefited the club tremendously."

"Most kids would probably be in the house playing games or something," Hardy said. "Now they're out exercising and having some fun."