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ALL-OHIO ELITE KNIGHTS...WINNERS ON AND OFF THE COURT!

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PHOTOS PROVIDED

Family. Prayerful. Respectful. Hardworking. Disciplined. Dedicated. Humble. Team oriented. Those are descriptors of a team who since 2006 have won 4 state of Ohio titles, 3 National Championships, and several other tournament titles. They work as hard off the court as they do on the court. Core to their value system is studying hard and being focused on obtaining and valuing education. Community outreach is also an aspect of what they are all about. They practice their sport, actively compete locally and nationwide, and have fun playing a game that they love. Oh, did I mention they are now 11 years old and have been at this since second grade?

That's right! This year, the All-Ohio Elite Knights, formerly under the Cincinnati Knights, are the 2009 USSSA (United States Specialty Sports Association) National Champions and the 2009 Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) National Basketball Champions/11U! Competing against teams in the 11 years old category from across the country in tournaments held in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and Cocoa Beach, Florida, respectively, the All-Ohio Elite Knights persevered to bring home the titles within weeks of each other and in the same year. "We are so proud of them all." said a proud parent.

The All-Ohio Elite Knights, a well-rounded yet humble team, does more than just focus on basketball as the team, coaches, and parents/family value education, academics, and community. As stated on the



All-Ohio Elite Knights team and coaches won the 2009 AAU National Basketball/11U competition in Cocoa Beach, Florida; The team was one of the 75 teams vying for the title.. This is the second AAU National title for the All-Ohio Elite Knights in four years.

All-Ohio league website, the program's mission is "dedicated to supporting and impacting youth through athletic, social, and cultural experiences in hopes that it gives our youth the foundation that leads to successful adulthood".

While on the court, it's play hard, play smart, work together, and have fun. When not on the court or while enroute to a game or tournament, it's not uncommon to see a player with a book, working on homework, or lending a helping hand. These student-athletes know that it's not all about having basketball skill but also to study,

learn, keep up their grades, be supportive of others, and be a respectful and good person.

On many of the team's travels, an educational visit to a museum or place of interest is also on the itinerary. For example, the All-Ohio Elite Knights have visited black colleges (Xavier, Morehouse, Clark Atlanta), visited the mall on Washington (Washington D.C.), visited the King Center and walked the Freedom Walkway (Atlanta, GA), and visited the

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National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel (Memphis, TN).

In addition, the All-Ohio Elite Knights give back through community outreach as they know they should share their blessings with others. "Our boys are very humble and they understand that traveling around the country for the game of basketball at 9, 10, and 11 years old isn't the norm. Everybody doesn't get to do that. We try to instill in them that you have received a gift and a talent, and you have to pay that forward and you have to give that back to the community." said a team player's parent. The team's community outreach has included donating to the Salvation Army and celebrating with local firefighters to show thanks on Firefighters Appreciation Day.

The All-Ohio Elite Knights, comprised of 10 – 12 players from across Greater Cincinnati, attend public/private/parochial schools and crosses socioeconomic levels. The team, whose season starts in

October and runs through August, practices twice a week in addition to team play throughout the season. While the league is competitive on the court, school work and being a good student/person is stressed, monitored, and expected off the court. Coaches and parents are focused on doing "what is best for the kids" as a close eye is kept on academic progress and they work together to ensure that academic standards are being met and that the "kids get to be kids". The atmosphere that surrounds the team is constructive, supportive, positive, uplifting, and motivating. Win or lose, the kids are taught "to be the best, give your best".

Financial support is needed and greatly appreciated to support the team's efforts. Team Sponsors (businesses/individuals/organizations) and donations from the community are welcomed and vital

to defraying costs such as travel, uniforms, league fees, and other related expenses. The dedication and hard-work of parents and family to fund-raise also is a major contributor towards defraying expenses.

The team and supporters look forward to the upcoming season as the team prepares to compete at the 12 years old/6th grade level. Look for the team to compete locally throughout the year including hosting its' annual tournament which is scheduled for April 9-11, 2010. Over eighty (80) teams from across and outside of Ohio are anticipated to compete in the 2010 tournament.

"A new name but the same game" is what folks are noticing when you see the All-Ohio Elite Knights in action. Bottom line, the All-Ohio Elite Knights, now under the All-Ohio league, has been and will continue to be winners on and off the court. Coaches, who volunteer their time, along with dedicated and committed parents/family, work with the boys to not only develop their basketball skills but also help them achieve their potential as well-educated and responsible young men. Said a player on the team, "I like being on a team where everybody works hard, like the players and the coaches. We all have good experience playing basketball, we never give up or down each other."

To learn more about the All-Ohio Elite Knights, contact Coach Ron Hicks at (513)623-9714. Interested in being a team sponsor, making a donation, or volunteering at the 2010 tournament? Contact Kasi Jordan at Mrsjordan14@yahoo.com.

The All-Ohio Elite Knights took time to show their thanks to the Paddock Hills Fire Department. The team took desserts to the firehouse on Firefighters Appreciation Day.

