



THE HUDDLE

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.

NEW YOUTH SPORTS COORDINATOR

Hi everyone!

My name is Dustin Hamm and I started working with Kris at The Salvation Army starting in July of 2025. Kris asked me to write a short bio to introduce myself, and I am obliging her, but if you get bored and you skip to the next section, no hard feelings! I am married to Britt and dad to MJ, Owen, Charlie, and Bradley. They are all way cooler than I am. We moved to Duluth in 2019 and when we got settled we started looking for basketball opportunities for our kids and the great google machine brought us to the RBA.



Unlike many of you, I myself do not have the scars from the rug burns at The Salvation Army carpet (my youth basketball scars were from scrapes on tile seams in a small gym in southwest MN), but I volunteered as a coach for the RBA when my kids started playing in 2021. I coached K1 and 2nd/3rd for my oldest 2 kids from 2021 to 2025 and I loved every minute of it.

I grew up playing basketball on a rectangle slab of concrete pretending to be Penny Hardaway and Reggie Miller and had dreams of hearing Bob Costas announce my name. While that didn't come to fruition, basketball was a huge part of my life and I played from the time I could walk and shoot on a little tikes hoop through my senior year of high school. I love the game of basketball. I love coaching kids and seeing their growth as players and as people and I'm excited to do be a small part of the basketball journeys of so many here in Duluth.

This is a great place for kids to learn, grow, and develop, and I couldn't be prouder to be a part of this. I hope that myself, and all the coaches we have here, are great examples of how positive coaching in athletics can be a positive in kids' lives. You will likely see me with a Wolves hat on, --feel free to say hi and if you are a fan of Inside the NBA with Chuck, Kenny, Shaq and Ernie, we could be best friends.

If you have kids, or know kids who are debating about giving basketball a try, we'd love to have them come and join what we have to offer here!

See you on the court!

2025-2026 DALE STOCKE COACH OF THE YEAR COACH BETH MONCRIEF

From a parent: Coach Beth goes beyond being just a coach on the court. She helps the girls emotionally as well. She has made my daughter love school again & made her love for basketball even stronger. All the girls love her. She is very welcoming and kind. She has a genuine personality & I'm blessed that my daughter has Coach Beth for a coach this season. She is definitely a role model on & off the court. She helps the girls make sure above all else that they are having fun! Coach Beth goes above & beyond the job of a coach. She personalizes her relationship with every individual child and works their needs for help into our weekly practices. She genuinely cares for these girls & they all genuinely care for her. She's awesome!!



FROM DULUTH SALVATION ARMY LEADERSHIP

We are excited for the start of summer clinics & the upcoming 2026-2027 RBA season! For those who may not have gotten a chance to meet us yet, we are Captains Anthony & Elysia Nordan. Together, we server as the pastors & administrators (Corps Officers) of the Duluth Salvation Army. We have a passion for meeting people where they are & building community relationships. We love to express our faith in Jesus through relational ministry. Our family also includes four children (Deborah, David, Hannah, & Tabitha) as well as our dog, Tobi. You might find Captain Anthony coaching David, assisting referees, or our whole family at a game cheering on players. This past year I, Captain Anthony, had a chance to be a coach



for my daughter's 2-3rd grade team. Watching girls with different basketball experiences, ranging from first time playing to multiple year RBA players, become a cohesive team by the end of the year was a true joy.

The best part was seeing the players express the Marks of Excellence during practice & the games. Our prayer is that each of the RBA coaches, players, & families has a wonderful experience of individual & collective growth!

Salvation Army Ministries & Services

Sunday

9:15am Prayer
9:30am Sunday School
10:30am Coffee & Fellowship
11:00am Worship
Weekly & Monthly men's women's & youth meetings

- Free Lunch Mon-Fri 11:30am-12:30pm
- Food shelf hours Mon & Thurs. 1:30-4pm
- Housing & emergency assistance, medical food shelf or to volunteer call 218-722-7934



SA Gaming - join in the fun 5-8pm once a month for all ages! Nintendo Switch, board & card games, Xbox series X, Smash Bros, Just Dance & more! Contact Capt. Anthony 218-671-0224

GIANNA KNEEPKENS - PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

Gianna began playing basketball at home, played RBA then for Duluth Marshall, University of Utah then transferred UCLA where on April 5, they beat South Carolina in the National Championship game! At the time of this writing she is expected to be drafted to the WNBA.

Why do you play, and why do I love playing? I play for many reasons; I love the game, specifically the competition, the fact that when you work hard, you see the results in your game, & that people have to depend on you, which in turn requires you to rely on your teammates. You must trust your teammates, & they must trust you to be successful. Therefore, building a team must happen both on & off the court.

What was one of your most challenging mountains to climb? I have played basketball almost every day since I was a little kid, starting in RBA. One & a half years ago, I had an injury that ended my season. When you put so much into something, & it is taken away from you, you learn what a privilege it is. I grew more in the year I couldn't play than in the years I had previously played. The growth was not in direct basketball skills but in being a student of the game & discovering the impact you can have on your team by supporting them, even though you don't play.

What other sports have you played? I have played T-ball, played competitive soccer until my junior year, golfed in my senior year, & I play pickleball when I can.

What advice would you give your younger self? Do the hard things to get better. It is easy to work on things you enjoy, but you improve when you work on things you don't like.

What is your game day ritual? My game day ritual starts the night before. I try hard to get a good night's sleep. I play better when I am rested. I wake up early, try to have a healthy breakfast, & head to the gym, usually alone, to get some shots. I visualize the game, & I pray.

Does your number have any significance to you? When I was at Utah, my number was 5; the number 5 has been mine for most of my career, from grade school through high school & at Utah. The 5 is for my brothers; they mean a lot to me, & I would not be the player I am without them. At UCLA, I can't be #5 because someone else is. I chose the number 8 because it represents the size of my family, & my family has always been supportive of me.

What does your workout routine look like? That is a tricky question. Every day, my warm-up routine seems the same, but I adjust my focus each day depending on what I think I need to work on. I typically work on all aspects of the game, ball handling, shooting at all levels, & other fundamentals.

Who is your favorite player? Anyone who plays for the Lynx.

How do you improve your shooting form? First, work near the basket; once that is mastered, move to a midrange & work on the free throws. Don't move to a three-shot until you can get 60 or 70 percent from closer shots. Taking far shots without being ready will wreck your shot. Watch YouTube videos that tell you what a good shot is. At home, sit in a chair without any fragile things nearby & shoot shots over & over again until you have a habit. You can also videotape yourself & see what you need to work on.

What mattered to you when you chose the college you did over the others? There are many factors that contribute to the decision. There were the basics: do they have academic programs I could take, do they support their female athletes, & do they compete at a level I believe I can compete at? Furthermore, I wanted to fit into the culture, find a place that utilized my skill sets, make an impact, & ensure I could be myself while growing the most. It fulfilled the aspects of me that are important academically, athletically, spiritually, physically (through strong strength & conditioning), & socially (in terms of team culture).

Share a lesson learned in basketball: Hard work is not always the thing that gets you what you want, but hard work with purpose and doing the things you don't like has better outcomes. You need to always keep all essential aspects of your life in balance and make sacrifices of the unnecessary.

There is a process to everything, and if you miss the little steps, you will be inconsistent with the bigger steps. Some people don't want others to succeed.

Does faith impact your game? I am a person of faith, and I try to make my faith the highest priority. God is highly evident when you are an athlete. I believe God creates all people with a purpose, and that purpose is to build up the Kingdom. Every person has something to contribute to the greater whole. We may not understand how God puts everything together, but if each person uses their gift for the right purpose, the world will be a more whole and peaceful place, I believe. Still, I know my gifts have a place alongside all other people's gifts, none greater or more important than any other. With that said, when I play, I try to glorify God by giving back what He has given me. All for His Glory.



WHAT COACHES ARE SAYING

Having athletes who have grown up playing RBA Basketball is a tremendous asset to our program. From a young age they learn the value of hard work & skill development, but more importantly they learn how to have fun and compete on the court. We've had numerous RBA alumni wearing the Bulldog uniform, & we couldn't be more proud! **Justin Wieck UMD Men**

I LOVE having RBA girls come play for Denfeld! It is such an advantage to have girls come with playing experience under their belts. Girls who can dribble with both hands, make lay-ups, having learned proper shooting form, who know how to box out & rebound, etc. But even more than that, I love to have girls come in who know how to play hard, have fun, be coachable, & be a great teammate. The RBA teaches all of those things! **Erik Reinertsen Denfeld Girls**

When our players come through youth basketball, especially programs like the Rookie Basketball Association, it gives our program a great foundation. It means they show up already understanding the game. But more importantly, they begin to understand how to do things on the floor. They start to learn how to play the game, how to play the game hard, how to play together, & how to compete the right way. All of this matters so much. Because when those players reach our youth program, we're not starting from scratch, we're building on something. We can go deeper, coach harder, & push them further because the habits are already there. **Rhett McDonald East Boys**

RBA BY THE NUMBERS

Here are the programs provided between Summer 2025-Spring 2026.

Summer K-6 grade Clinics

- 54 Kids, 20 girls & 34 boys
- 4 sessions
- 4 youth volunteers giving 145 hours
- Theme: Play Out Loud
- Lunch & snack provided

Northwoods Camp

- 34 kids went to The Salvation Army Northwoods camp & enjoyed an overnight summer camp experience at no cost

Winter k-8 grade Basketball

- 506 kids, 157 girls, 349 boys
- 91 volunteer coaches invested over 2,280 hours
- 25 schools represented
- 200 games, 531 practice at 11 facilities
- Players had opportunity to attend practices with Denfeld, East, and UMD teams
- Teams collected over 515 pounds of food for The Salvation Army food shelf during the RBA food drive

Spring K1 Skills & Scrimmage

- 49 kids, 17 girls & 32 boys
- Over 4 weeks 6 volunteers gave 24 hours
- Players developed their skills then scrimmaged at the end of each session

Spring 2-7 grade 3 on 3

- 81 kids, 45 girls, 36 boys
- 6 weeks
- Sessions opened with skills warm up then players were divided into teams for the night & played games

57 Full scholarships were given between summer 2025-spring 2026!

INTERESTED IN COACHING 2026-2027?

The RBA relies on 2 volunteers to coach each team. Coaches run a 1 hour weekly practice & 10-one hour games. The coaches meeting is in October, season runs Nov-mid-March. RBA training & resources include Jr. NBA curriculum & 3DCoaching. Contact the RBA 218-576-6174 now for details & to join the team of coaches making an impact for life!

SUMMER CLINICS

Each summer RBA staff focus on developing the WHOLE athlete, body mind, & heart. RBA believes basketball offers a platform to develop not only great athletes but also great citizens, girls & boys of moral character who will become the change agents in the Duluth community, & at our Summer Clinics we are intentional about leveraging that platform. We focus on developing fundamental skills as well as character qualities of teamwork, respect, integrity, & excellence through basketball. Players participate in individual training, contests, games, plus small group activities & discussions building a team mindset & mental strength. Clinics are 9am-4pm & include lunch, snack & t-shirt. Scholarships are available & must be approved before registering, go to bit.ly/RBADULUTH for the online form & to register.

K-1 grade: June 11-12; \$50

2-3 grade: June 15-17 &/or June 29-July 30 \$80 each

4-6 grade: June 22-24; \$80

SEND YOUR CHILD TO CAMP!

Each year, hundreds of children get an experience to remember at The Salvation Army's Northwoods Camp on beautiful Elbow Lake, near Finlayson, MN. Days at this faith based camp include time focused on the weekly theme, electives like fishing, archery, canoeing, evening programs, free time activities such as swimming, a two-story waterslide, arts & crafts. All meals and transportation to & from the Duluth Salvation Army are included. Local leadership have made the decision to remove barriers for all by covering the cost of this camp. That's right, there is NO cost for any of these camps! Use the code "DULUTH46".

CAMP DATES

- Teen camp ages 13-17 June 22-26
- Music camp ages 9-17 June 29-July 4
- Kids camp ages 7-9 July 6-8
- Sports camp ages 9-17 July 17 (RBA staff at this camp)
- Tween camp ages 10-12 July 20-23
- Family camp for the whole family July 24-26



Go to bit.ly/NorthwoodsCamp26 to register use the code 'DULUTH46'



OTHER LOCAL SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES

East girls - Coach Bashaw email at Eddie.bashawgbb@gmail.com for summer options

East boys - Coach McDonald www.dultheastbasketball.com/summerprogram

Denfeld girls - Coach Reinertsen 218-341-5584 erik@thewatersedge.net June 15-19, 4-8 gr, 9-11am, \$50

Denfeld boys - Coach Homere 218-409-5558 homere10@gmail.com July 20-24, 3-8 gr, 12-2pm, \$40

UMD Camps - <https://umdbulldogsportcamps.com/>

UWS - <https://uwsyellowjackets.com/sports/2025/4/4/mens-basketball-camps.aspx>

<https://uwsyellowjackets.com/sports/2025/4/4/womens-basketball-camps.aspx>



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Registration for the 39th season of RBA, 2026-2027, will open online, Tuesday, September 8, 2026. Go to bit.ly/RBADULUTH for RBA news, game videos, calendar & registration.

HELP NEEDED 40 YEAR CELEBRATION

The 2027-2028 season marks 40 years of Rookie Basketball in Duluth & we need your help! We are looking to hear from parents, volunteer coaches, players, or spectators with pictures, video, & stories from you & your experience. Information on the upcoming celebration will be sent in next summer's newsletter. Please send your contributions to RBA Director at kristin.mallett@usc.salvationarmy.org or send them to: The Salvation Army, ATTN. RBA, P.O. Box 16052, Duluth, MN 55816

THE DULUTH SALVATION ARMY
**BLACK & WHITE
BALL**

SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY YOU LOVE WHILE GIVING BACK
May 15, 2026 | Clyde Event Center | 5 - 8:30 PM

Social Hour, Keynote Speaker:
SOLOMON WITHERSPOON,
Dinner, Silent Auction,
Photo Booth &
Foxtrot and Swing Lessons
by Simply Ballroom

For tickets: bit.ly/bwb2026

Thank you RBA Sponsors!

To be removed from this mailing list or if you have questions about The Salvation Army, the RBA, or something in this newsletter, contact RBA Director, Kris Mallett at kristin.mallett@usc.salvationarmy.org or 218-576-6174.