

Sports

Meet SOMA Hoops & SOMA Basketball Boosters



By Fred Smith

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SOUTH ORANGE, NJ – Saturday, January 4th, TAPinto SOMA responded to an invitation to see SOMA Hoops in Action. There I met up with Taylor Valentine, the founder and director of SOMA Hoops & The SOMA Basketball Boosters.

Valentine was in the midst of speaking to some of the Sponsors of the program for the 2024 – 25 Season, reviewing the history and status of the organization. The impetus was learning that two people were taking 11 girls to Berkeley Heights on Saturday mornings so they could participate in a Hoops program for young girls.

They first started with just a few children, and it quickly became about 100 children and parents, and about eight months were spent planning how to run the program and SOMA Hoops was born. That first year we were told there were about 100 girls in the program and 170 volunteers.

This year there are currently 692 children in the program youngsters from First through 10th grade. Friday nights there are 4on 4 games being played.

The Booster Group is now a 501-C3 thanks to the efforts of Lizzie Wolff.

It's all day in the SOMS gym, plus some hours at the Baird. The program had 160 Docents in year one. Now there are 40 High School Referees and 225 volunteers. Columbia High School Basketball Players also help the kids learn the game.

As Valentine said, "It's the impact of local messaging". They also have a Scholarship program so that every child who wants to play is able to do so.

The children are taught how to dribble, the proper way to hold the ball to shoot a basket. They teach the kids to help and have many volunteer opportunities.

Soma Hoops has some 15 SOMA HOOPS Sponsors for the 2024-2025 Season who make it possible to achieve all this.

