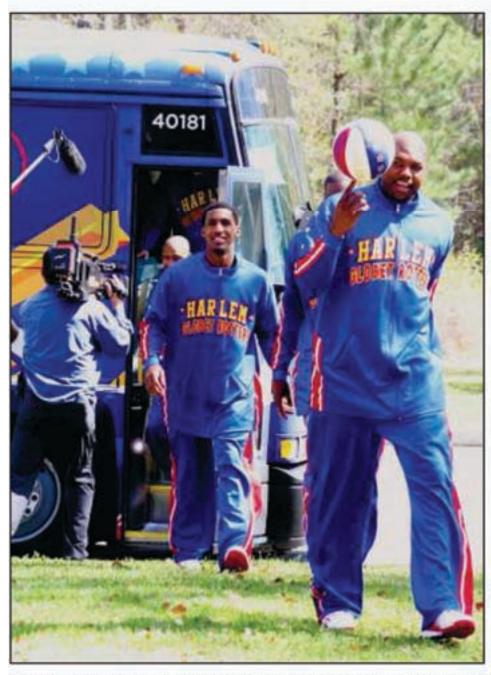
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# Tribune & Georgian

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NATHANIEL "BIG EASY" Lofton twirts a basketball on his finger Friday as he leads the rest of his Harlem Globetrotters teammates toward the new basketball court at The Methodist Home for Children and Youth in St. Marys. The team surprised the boys and played a game with them during a dedication ceremony held Friday afternoon for their court. (Tribune & Georgian photo/Mark Beavers)

## Globetrotters help boys home break in new court

BY MARK BEAVERS

Tribune & Georgian Staff

What the 11 boys living at The Methodist Home for Children and Youth, a group home in St. Marys, were expecting Friday were rolling "Lovetown, USA" cameras capturing the dedication ceremony for their new full basketball court, built through donated services and funds raised by the home's summer fish fry.

What they didn't expect on the court against members of the Harlem Globefamous exhibition basketball team.

This will just be one of those stories I'll tell to my kids when I get older.

### Charief Culberson Boys home resident

was playing their first game happened as a blue, red and yellow bus pulled into the home's drive and the traditrotters, the world's most tional orange basketball was set aside as Globetrotter Nathaniel "Big Easy" But that is exactly what Lofton, spinning a red,

white and blue basketball on his fingertip, led his teammates onto the new court, where the surprised boys were waiting.

"My mouth was wide open basically," said boys home resident Charief Culberson, 17, "I'll just remember when I was a kid that I got to play against the Harlem Globetrotters. This will just be one of those stories I'll tell to my kids when I get older."

The Globetrotters showed off some ball tricks to those gathered for the dedication before playing a game with the boys, whose

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## Play: Businesses donated to construct court

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ages range from 12 to 19, talking to them about maintaining a positive attitude and signing balls and other gear for them.

Globetrotter Will "Bull" Bullard spoke with the boys about his time in foster care as a teenager and how he did not said. let his hardships keep him from achieving his goals.

"You got to stay positive with anything you do," Bullard said, noting the boys are in a good place now.

to Jacksonville, Fla., Friday night to watch the Globetrotters' game.

director of The Methodist Home for Children and Youth, said that, while thousands went to the Globetrotters game, the boys at the Methodist home got a chance to have a personal experience Loggins said. with the team.

had so many losses in their reality show about the com- mark@tribune-georgian.com

them," he said.

led to Friday's dedication began after the basketball goal summer, and the home's auxiliary board decided to raise funds for a court, Loggins

Court builder W.H. Gross Construction obtained donated materials from Lowe's and reduced-price services from Waycross Paving, East Coast Concrete, Towers Con-The boys also headed down crete, and Stone and More.

Auxiliary board member Linda O'Shaughnessy, who is Methodist home. also part of the "Lovetown, Devon Loggins, regional USA" volunteer team, brought the project to the attention of the show's producers, Loggins said.

> said they would like to come out and film the project,"

"Lovetown, USA," is an Contact reporter Mark "For our boys, who have upcoming documentary-style

lives, now they have some- munity and individual love thing special that was just for currently being filmed by **BBC** Worldwide Productions The new court project that in Camden for Oprah Winfrey Network.

"My office started to fill at the boys home broke last up with basketballs ... and jerseys," Loggins said, noting "Lovetown" producer Liz Brunwin helped connet the gear donors with the home.

> Loggins said he and the boys are grateful for the support from the community and "Lovetown" during the basketball court construction project, but noted community support is no stranger to the

"We're aware that God has been working through people in the community since we opened our doors in 2002," Loggins said. "It makes me "They became excited and feel blessed to be part of something that is bigger than all of us."

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RESIDENTS OF THE Methodist Home for Children and Youth in St. Marys react as members of the Harlem Globetrotters step off their tour bus Friday. The exhibition basketball team helped dedicate a new basketball court at the home. Camera crews from "Lovetown, USA" filmed the event. (Tribune & Georgian photo/Mark Beavers)