

# Tech Prep Real World Students Go to Basketball Camp and Come Home with Leadership Skills

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Dozens of basketballs bounced on the gym floor or rolled way from the high school schools attending the Camp of Champs at Texas State Technical College-Harlingen. But the 180 Tech Prep students who were dribbling balls and practicing chest shots and jump shots have set their sites on higher education rather than basketball's hall of fame.

Camp of Champs, led by retired basketball star Greg Manning, is a life skills clinic on a basketball framework that is designed to assist young people in reaching for their best. The high-energy camp helped wrap up a year of Tech Prep-RGV sessions which focused on mentoring, choices for the future, job shadowing and participation in community service projects.

"You're going to have opportunities come your way," Manning told the students crowded on the field house bleachers. "It's up to you to take advantage of those opportunities." He advised them to find what they enjoy and go do it. "Whatever in the world you want to do, do your best. Your best is good enough"

Over the sounds of shouts, laughter and the slaps of high fives as the students and camp counselors ran through drills, Manning said, "This gets them up and moving. They're going to do things they never thought they would do." The Camp of Champs blends motivational stories, having fun, and learning new skills--not basketball skills so much as interpersonal skills. Manning challenged the students with stories of ordinary people who have done extraordinary things with their lives.

Edinburg North High school student Cassandra Lomas crowded near a camp counselor who was giving instructions on the next activity. Although she prefers softball and other sports to basketball, the camp allowed her to meet new people and have new experiences. "Even the drills are more fun here. We're just having a great time."

Tennis is Cesar Silva's usual sport, but the Donna High senior admitted he, too, was having a good time. "I hope they do this again next year," said Silva, who plans to attend UTPA on his way to becoming an architect.

Martha Sanchez, a McAllen High freshman in the Tech Prep program, was all smiles after she tried passing a basketball back and forth between her legs. Trying something new --something you won't be graded on--can be both amusing and enlightening, she learned. She watched another student handle the ball with ease and had to ask him, "Have you done this before?" Yes, he said, he had practiced.