

Flossmoor couple want to bring semi-pro basketball to Southland

BY DAVID P. FUNK
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If things go as planned, the Southland Saints will bring semi-pro basketball to the South Suburbs when they begin playing in the American Basketball Association later this year.

Flossmoor residents Les and Monique Rodgers will own the team, which hasn't yet nailed down a home venue. Les Rodgers said they're looking at three possible locations in the area and would like to stay as close as possible to Flossmoor.

"It's really difficult for a family to get together, go to a basketball game or for a kid to walk up to an NBA player and get an autograph or interact. We can offer that in the Southland," Les Rodgers said. "It's our goal to build an arena in the South Suburbs in the next two years so families can come to see us just like they do at the United Center, just without the trouble, the traffic, the high (-priced tickets), without the nosebleed seats."

According to the ABA website, 70% of ABA owners are "African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American and women." The Rodgerses helped start an ABA team in Aurora and secured the rights to a team of their own within 35 miles of their home in Flossmoor. No one can set up a team in the league within that area.

"I want all of the best players from that area," Rodgers said.

Les Rodgers is a Cook County detective who's worked major cases, including the 2008 Lane Bryant murders in Tinley Park. Monique Rodgers is a human resources manager. The couple also hope to use the basketball team to extend their youth leadership efforts. They're also marriage ministry leaders for New Faith Baptist Church in Matteson. They do couples and family counseling and corporate training.

Saints players will be asked to take part in that outreach, Rodgers said, as mentors in a youth program being developed simultaneously.

"(Owning a basketball team) is a great way to connect with the youth," Rodgers said. "We're using basketball to teach kids life skills."

The Saints hope to provide an enter-



Provided Photo

Monique and Les Rodgers

taining product for about 20 games between November and April, as well.

The ABA has some unique rules, including a "3D light." When the light is on, 2-point shots are worth three points, 3-point shots are worth four and half-court shots are worth five.

Players also cannot foul out. A sixth foul results in a technical foul so the opposing team gets free throws and the ball, but the player remains in the game. Any subsequent fouls called on the player are also technicals.

Rodgers said the team is looking for a head coach and assistants, as well as holding tryouts for players. Anyone interested can reach them at southland-saints@gmail.com or find the team on Facebook or Instagram.

They're looking for athletes with high-level experience like college basketball or other professional leagues. Players outside of the designated area can reach out to the team but the Saints cannot actively recruit them.

"This is a source of entertainment for the family, but it can also build community," Rodgers said. "Any time when you have a team where the community can go to and feel safe and have fun, where their kids can go to and develop, where local businesses can connect, we can be that hub that brings everything together."

H-F math student in state tourney

BY CHRONICLE STAFF

Homewood-Flossmoor senior Keisha Toguem will enter state competition April 30 after placing second in the pre-calculus competition of the ICTM Mathletes Regional Championships Feb. 26.

H-F Mathletes team members named to the 2021-22 All-Conference team are Tolani Babawale, Asha Garrett, Xavier White, Lorin Wright, Fatima Hernandez, Jered Maltbia, Alexander Pease, Jenna Rechsteiner, Sophia Hinich, Keisha Toguem and Wynton Wright.

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