

# Hoop dreams and more for kids

By SANDRA ECKSTEIN  
seckstein@ajc.com

In Nikki Wilson's dream, children with developmental or physical difficulties can do well in school, play on sports teams and grow up and get a job.

That's why the occupational therapist for Atlanta Public Schools founded Dream Makers Youth Foundation three years ago. Wilson has plans and dreams that could one day help hundreds of children.

"Seeing the problems these children can have in school and in their home lives, I realized they needed more specialized help in some areas," Wilson said.

She started a tutoring program to help developmentally delayed children and volunteered to coach a wheelchair soccer team in Cobb County.

A fund-raiser for the organization this Saturday will let some able-bodied people, including local celebrities, find out how much stamina and talent it takes to play a sport from a wheelchair. The Celebrity Wheelchair Basketball Jam is being held at Campbell Middle School in Smyrna from 6-9 p.m. Local wheelchair athletes, including some children and members of the Shepherd Center wheelchair basketball team, will be playing alongside people like former pro football player Tony Jones, R&B artist Case, members of Soul for Real and world champion kickboxer Mark Selbee. Josh Childress of the Atlanta Hawks and Jumpin' Jackie Jackson of the original Harlem Globetrotters will act as coaches.

"A lot of these kids don't get the opportunity to engage in competitive sports like others their age," Wilson said. "This gives them a chance to shine for a little while."

An autograph session kicks off at 6 p.m. There will be raffle prizes, giveaways and performances by R&B girl group Az1 during the game. Tickets to the event are \$7 for ages 5 to 18 and \$10 for adults. Children under 5 are free.

The school is at 3295 S. Atlanta Road. Tickets can be purchased at the door or online at [www.dreammakersyouthfoundation.org](http://www.dreammakersyouthfoundation.org).



Ed Owen

Atlanta Hawks player **Josh Childress** will be back this year as a coach in the Celebrity Wheelchair Basketball Jam on Saturday.