

Helping Out the Hometown

An Interview with Chris Paul, Founder,
CP3 Foundation, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Dealing with a Global Crisis

An Interview with Ruth Riley,
San Antonio Silver Stars, WNBA, San Antonio



Chris Paul (center) takes part in a Community Youth Forum as part of his annual Winston-Salem Weekend

EDITORS' NOTE A native of Lewisville, North Carolina, and an All-American at Wake Forest University, Chris Paul was the fourth overall pick in the 2005 NBA draft by the New Orleans Hornets. In his first year as a professional, Paul was named the 2005-06 NBA Rookie of the Year; helped lead USA Basketball to a bronze medal at the 2006 World Championships, and was a recipient of the NBA's Community Assist Award (September 2006) in recognition of his charitable initiatives.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF Founded in 2006 by Chris Paul and his family, the CP3 Foundation works in partnership with The Winston-Salem Foundation to support Paul's hometown's philanthropic activities. Through the foundation's major fundraising initiative, Chris Paul's Winston-Salem Weekend, Paul has refurbished basketball courts; established the Nathaniel Jones Scholarship Fund in honor of his late grandfather, which will award a Forsyth County, North Carolina, student a scholarship to attend Wake Forest University and partnered with Habitat for Humanity of Forsyth County.

Why did you decide to establish the CP3 Foundation?

Upon making it to the NBA, one of the first things that crossed my mind was how I could give back. Eventually, I thought that establishing a foundation would be a great opportunity to help as many people as I could. There are so many people who played a vital role in helping me get where I am, and this is an opportunity to repay them, as well as others. I think creating the CP3 Foundation was the best move I've made since becoming a professional basketball player.

Have you tried to coordinate CP3 Foundation's work with the work of NBA Cares?

You definitely try to mesh them together. The NBA has helped out so much with everything that I've done regarding the foundation. My foundation is merely one piece of the pie; the NBA has been doing this for years. And their work is global – everything from Basketball Without Borders to Habitat for Humanity; it's really impressive. Through NBA Cares, I have worked with Habitat for Humanity and have actually partnered with the local chapter in Forsyth County to be the main beneficiary of our annual fundraising initiative.

There is so much need in the community. How do you decide where to focus your attention?

I happen to have a real passion for kids, which is why we're starting the college scholarship fund named for my grandfather, who was my best friend. He owned the first black-owned service station in North Carolina, and he worked so hard, day in and day out. And there were so many times when people would come up to his service station and not have the money to pay for the gas. So he would give it to them for free. He was just happy to make someone else happy. So we're trying to make it an endowed scholarship that will be around for years to come. I am focused on improving lives in Winston-Salem because that's where I'm from and that city is who I am. ●

EDITORS' NOTE Originally from Kansas, Ruth Riley is an Olympic gold medalist who plays for the Women's National Basketball Association.

As a professional basketball player, you have a lot of time pressures. How do you find the time to be so involved in the Nothing But Nets campaign?

I've always been involved in our local communities, including Read to Achieve and various basketball clinics where I've worked with kids. But this opportunity is unique because it's dealing with a global crisis. I went to Kenya for Global AIDS Day in December, and when I got back, the WNBA had just signed up to partner with Nothing But Nets, and they asked me if I would be interested in being a spokesperson. I felt touched by my experiences over there, and felt compelled to help in any way that I could. We're so blessed here in the United States, and to go there and see a day in the life of an ordinary African – their lack of resources and opportunities, and the high levels of AIDS, and especially malaria, which is killing more children in Africa than anything else – is really heartbreaking. I think a lot of people didn't know that until Nothing But Nets created that awareness.

Will you be going back to visit Africa?

I'm supposed to be going back to Africa every off-season that I can. We're partners with the UN Foundation, so I'm working on some projects with them as well as Nothing But Nets. Our off-season for the WNBA is a little longer than that of the NBA so that gives me a bigger window to travel a little bit, and to be more involved. But I also see my involvement as not only going to Africa but also here in the United States, in creating awareness on the Nothing But Nets tour that will be going to different cities as well.

How crucial has the leadership of the NBA and WNBA been to the success of these types of community projects?

David [Stern] runs the league on and off the court, and it's been impressive to see the vision he has for such compelling community involvement, in our local cities as well as in non-WNBA cities, and on a global level with WNBA Cares and NBA Cares. Our grassroots program of expanding the love of basketball and using that to create positive messages, for causes like AIDS and HIV, or malaria, is extremely rewarding. And David has really propelled that throughout the organization.

Is this type of community service something you will continue after you finish playing professionally?

Definitely. I think it's more of a philosophy or a culture. I have these opportunities now because I'm playing basketball; but the NBA and the WNBA do a great job of keeping their former players involved. The NBA Legends do a lot of work during the NBA season because the current players can't get out, and I anticipate being involved beyond my career on the court as well. ●



Ruth Riley on one of her trips to Africa to assist in the fight against AIDS and malaria