



Shooting Stars Basketball 2026 Buddy/Volunteer Information

First, as we do every season, let me start with a big "Thank You!" Thank you for coming out and trying something that is exciting and challenging...even though the task ahead may seem a bit daunting (especially in such a crazy year). Hopefully you will hear "Thank You" a lot this season...you will definitely deserve it. We have grown Shooting Stars in 20 seasons from 8 kids to more than 200, but could not do it without you! We are continually amazed and humbled by the amazing support we receive!

Mission

Shooting Stars' mission is to promote inclusion and create enrichment opportunities for individuals with special needs and their families. We strive for our kids to have fun and learn the fundamentals of the game of basketball in a recreational environment.

Our Program

1. This is our 20th season and we have grown from 8 to 200+ players. It was started for my son Jacob, who has Autism.
2. We strive to help the players to do something we take for granted...be a part of a team...something they might otherwise never experience.
3. This program is tailored to each player. One size does not fit all. Each age group/team will function differently and each player will have unique needs and challenges.
4. The season runs 9 weeks (10 with Orientation). This is a big commitment, but it is important. Our kids thrive on familiarity.
5. We understand any apprehension, but I promise, in the end, it will be incredibly rewarding.
6. Our division is not competitive...volunteers will not win a game.
7. There will be a 1:1 buddy/player pairing (for the most part, where we can, depending on the number of buddies). We will see what works, but reserve the right to change anything that is not working.
8. We are open to suggestions.

Volunteers -- Your Role, Responsibilities and Working with Special Needs Kids

1. Your main job is to engage. Be a cheerleader. Be flexible. Be assertive. Learn. Try anything and everything. Be persistent. But remember to make it fun! (do it with a smile)
2. Follow the lead of the coaches and experienced buddies.
3. Don't be afraid to ask coaches or parents for help and advice. Also, let us know if something is happening that we should know about...communication is key.
4. Help the kids have fun (1st) and learn the game of basketball (2nd).
5. Keep the kids moving up and down the court.
6. We would like to ask that you be very patient and gentle with the special needs kids. The kids will have various levels of skills and abilities. They may act a bit strange or react to things differently than others might or that you would expect. It is important that you not "react". Please be patient and know that parents and other volunteers are always there to help. Always be supportive, using positive feedback. *What you say and how you say it makes a HUGE difference.*
7. You are "buddies" and "coaches" for the 1st half and the "opposing team" for the 2nd half. When you are the opposing team your job is still to help your player be successful. Buddies will play "soft" on offense and defense. Your #1 job (in addition to keeping your player engaged) in either role is protect your player from flying basketballs (passes, rebounds, etc...), as much as possible, as some of their reaction times may not be the fastest.
8. We will also ask for your flexibility. Your player may not be there every week or may only last a short while...for a variety of reasons. You may be asked to help out with another player, another team or even be a photographer for a day. Please be open to any role we ask you to do...all jobs are important...even if they do not seem like it in the moment. Just say yes!

9. Always focus on your player first.
10. Help your player score at least once.
11. Expectations...please expect the most from your player and push them to do a little bit more every week. Many times they will surprise us (and themselves) with the things they can do.
12. Get to know your player. Find out from them or parents what motivates them or what their interests are.
13. It is OK to “redirect your player” by gently moving them with your hands. If you have questions on this, please ask parents or coaches how to do it.
14. You are responsible for your player for the full 1 hour 15 minutes, even during breaks, until you make sure they get back to their parents/guardians at the end of the game/snack time. (except bathroom needs...redirect player to parents)
15. In this role you will work. It is important that we understand this is not a hang-out time with your friends. It is 100% about the special needs players.
16. Please try to keep the crazy stuff (half court shots, etc...) in check and remember player safety is our #1 job.

Practice and Games...and the Rules

1. We teach the kids to dribble, pass and shoot (bounce passes only).
2. We try to teach the basic rules, but they are very lightly enforced.
3. We use trial and error...eventually you or we will find something that works.
4. Each game and division will look different. Some may use subs and have one ball...some may not sub and have multiple balls. Our goal is subs and one ball, but we go with what works and adjust on the fly.
5. The game may look like chaos at times, but just go with it.

After the Game

Please stay for 15 minutes after the game for wrap up, game balls, snacks, etc... It is very important to the kids.

Schedule, Uniforms and Communication

1. This season we have 1:00, 2:00, 3:00, 4:00 and 5:00 group. Please make sure you know which one you have.
2. Flow and time between sessions will be tight. We ask for your help in keeping on schedule.
3. Please be on time and sign in...and let me know by email, as far in advance as possible, if you will not be able to make any days (email: coachrick@shootingstarsgroup.org).
4. Wear your buddy t-shirt to every event. Coaches, players and volunteers are “color coded” and will each wear a different color shirt to make it easy for spectators (and everyone else) to figure out roles.
5. We will post information to our Facebook page (Shooting Stars Special Needs Group) and website www.shootingstarsgroup.org. We prefer to send our communications by e-mail, so please check regularly.

Wrap-Up

1. I will say, it will not always be easy, but seeing the kids (and their parents) happy with those great big smiles on their faces...there is nothing like it! **Savor every “small victory”!**
2. Sorry to throw a lot at you so quickly. I know it is quite a bit to digest. You will see as this progresses that you are on a pretty cool journey...and **You** are special people because you stepped up!

Thank You Again,

Rick Clark (Coach Rick), Shooting Stars Program Director (cell: 760-504-7242)

Shooting Stars 2026 Schedule

8/30 Orientation and uniform pick-up **9/13** Game 1 **9/20** Game 2 **9/27**—Game 3—Picture Day **10/4** Game 4 **10/11** Game 5 **10/18** Game 6
10/25 Game 7 **11/1** Game 8 **11/8** Game 9 and End-of-season activities