

# Helping kids win at life

Brentwood youth basketball coach up for Knicks award

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A Long Island basketball coach is a finalist for the Junior Knicks Coach of the Year award, for his work with a youth league that welcomes children of all abilities and aims to keep players off the streets.

John Rueb, 50, of Brentwood, has been coaching basketball for 18 years. In 2010, he helped create the Brentwood Basketball Developmental League to give girls, including those with disabilities, the opportunity to play basketball.

Since then, the league, which serves children up to age 14, has grown from 25 girls to nearly 200 boys and girls. About 20 percent of the league's players have some kind of disability, Rueb said.

Rueb is one of five finalists for the award, which recognizes youth basketball coaches who have been making a positive impact on children by showing great integrity, character and leadership, a Knicks spokesman said.

"We're helping these kids find their love for basketball and build their confidence," Rueb said.

He was inspired to create the league while doing custodial work at Brentwood High School one night 10 years ago, when he saw a girl with one hand playing on the junior varsity basketball team.

"I wondered why kids with special needs only played with kids with special needs and not all the kids," Rueb said.



John Rueb helped form a league to give girls, including those with disabilities, a chance to play basketball.

The coach wanted a youth league that was more about participation and having fun than about competition. He previously coached in a different youth league, but said other coaches often used their best players to win, rather than giving all players an equal shot.

"I tell my players we either win or we learn," Rueb said.

He has a knack for motivating players, always showing enthusiasm and refusing to give up on them, said Evalyse Cortes, 18, who played under Rueb from 2013 to 2017.

"Coach Rueb was like a second father to me," she said. "He helped make me the person I

am today."

Rueb hopes getting kids onto the basketball court will also help keep them away from the gang violence that has plagued Brentwood.

Two of his former players, Nisa Mickens and Kayla Cuevas, were killed in Brentwood in 2016, allegedly by MS-13 gang members. The girls had played one season on Rueb's travel team in 2015, he said.

"We were very upset," Rueb said. "It hit very close to home."

Rueb spends anywhere from 15 to 35 hours a week coaching two travel teams and running and coaching at least three BDL teams. In addition, he is the

head custodian at East Elementary Kindergarten Center in Brentwood and the president of the Brentwood Booster Club, which has raised funds to provide hundreds of students with scholarships.

Rueb will find out whether he is the Junior Knicks Coach of the Year during the Knicks-Wizards game on Wednesday. If he wins, he will then automatically be in the running for Junior NBA Coach of the Year.

"I enjoy coaching because it's a way to give back to my community," Rueb said. "Kids learning life lessons through sports and smiling is the most rewarding thing."

## Sun returning in time for workweek

The gray skies are going to clear up Monday, so Long Islanders can put on a happy face after two days of rain.

Monday will be mostly dry after Saturday and Sunday brought more than an inch of rainfall and minor flooding across the island, the National Weather Service said.

Rain and fog could linger through early Monday morning, especially on the East End, and clear up just in time for the morning commute, meteorologists said. A chance of precipitation is possible through 5 or 6 a.m.

"By late afternoon it'll become sunny," said Faye Morrone, a meteorologist with the

weather service in Upton. "The clouds will clear during the day."

A cold front was "responsible for all this rain" and it's expected to bring the temperature down Monday to hover in the low 40s, just a couple degrees above the normal high of 40 for this time of

year, Morrone said.

Tuesday's high will be 38 and the low 33.

Wednesday and Thursday will have highs in the 50s and lows near 40, with a chance of rain Thursday.

Friday will be a bit colder, with a high near 45 and a low around 32. — RACHELLE BLIDNER

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### CORRECTION

The name of David Paiz-Torres was misspelled in a story Saturday about a free-ride program offered by the Nassau Inter-County Express for low-income riders.

### THIS DATE IN HISTORY

**1809** Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, was born in a log cabin in Hardin (now LaRue) County, Kentucky.

**1909** The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded.

**1914** Groundbreaking took place for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

**1963** A Northwest Orient Airlines Boeing 720 broke up during severe turbulence and crashed into the Florida Everglades, killing all 43 people aboard.

**1980** The FBI announced that about \$5,800 of the \$200,000 ransom paid to hijacker "D.B. Cooper" before he parachuted from a Northwest Orient jetliner in 1971 had been found by an 8-year-old boy on a riverbank of the Columbia River in Washington state.

**1993** In a crime that shocked and outraged Britons, two 10-year-old boys lured 2-year-old James Bulger from his mother at a shopping mall near Liverpool, England, then beat him to death.

**1999** The Senate voted to acquit President Bill Clinton of perjury and obstruction of justice.