

Glenn speaks with his hands to campers

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ATLANTA (AP)—Former NBA player Mike Glenn has been honoring his dad for 30 years with a basketball camp that speaks loudly to dozens of high school kids who can't hear.

This Father's Day, the NBA broadcaster who played 10 years in the league will open the 30th Mike Glenn Basketball Camp for the Hearing Impaired.

His father, Charles Glenn, worked at the Georgia School for the Deaf in Cave Spring, Ga., about 83 miles northwest of Atlanta, for almost 20 years.

Students at the school accepted the younger Glenn, who quickly learned sign language and was motivated to take up his father's work.

Each year, Glenn welcomes about 75 to 100 hearing impaired high school boys and girls from several states for a week of basketball and fun. This year's anniversary has given him reason to reflect on three decades of campers.

"It is a real milestone," Glenn said of the camp that begins on Sunday. "When I started it, it was not with the intention this was necessarily something I was going to be doing 29 years later. I did it just as an extension of what I had been brought up in, of sharing with people."

Glenn says his specialty hasn't changed through the years.

"We've removed barriers and jumped over hurdles," he said. "This year we'll have T-shirts which read 'We were deaf when deaf wasn't cool.'"

And each year, Glenn remembers his father—who worked the camp with him for 20 years before his death in 2000.

"I would receive so many blessings from going around his school with the kids," Glenn said. "I'm just continuing his heritage."

While playing for the [New York Knicks](#) in 1980, Glenn volunteered to attend a tournament for hearing impaired players. He said no one at the tournament knew he would be able to communicate directly with the players.

"I said 'Man I'd love to come,'" Glenn said, adding the invitation stirred memories of "some of the best days of my life" with his father's students.

Glenn, 53, was an instant hit with the deaf players.

"I just started signing for myself. I didn't need an interpreter," he said, adding the participants initially assumed he must be deaf.

"A hush just fell over the audience," he said. "They were saying 'One of the Knicks is deaf! He's signing!' It was kind of funny. They just embraced me."

Glenn, moved by the reception from the young players, started a summer camp that year.

"I think it was the nation's first summer basketball camp for deaf kids," he said. "There were about 35 boys that year."

The camp followed Glenn, a native of Rome, Ga., to Atlanta when he played four seasons with the [Atlanta Hawks](#). He finished his career with Milwaukee but returned to Atlanta to spend 14 seasons as the Hawks' broadcaster.

Glenn, who played at Southern Illinois University, says his father received no pay for his work coaching his students, so he has not asked for pay. Campers make a small donation but Glenn says he has depended on the generosity of two churches and a recreation center in Decatur, Ga. The churches provide lodging and gyms for the campers.

He said he also depends on contributions of time and money from companies, athletes and other celebrities—which has been especially important during these tough economic times.

Glenn said defensive end Jamaal Anderson of the [Atlanta Falcons](#) made a financial contribution. Anderson's father lost his hearing when he was 6.

"This is his 30th year," Anderson said. "That shows he's had pretty good success."

Glenn said Atlanta Hawks forward Josh Smith purchased tickets for 125 to visit the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta during the six-day camp.

"Pete Smith, Josh's dad, said 'Josh, that's what I want for Father's Day,'" Glenn said.

Glenn said others have made similarly generous gifts.

"(Charles) Barkley gave a large sum of money a couple years ago," he said.

His list of others who have helped includes former Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, Martin Luther King III, Hawks legend and team executive Dominique Wilkins, broadcaster Marv Albert and former Hawks coach Mike Fratello, former teammate and current Boston coach Doc Rivers.

Glenn says the camper who enjoyed the most basketball success was Willie Brown, who played at Hofstra. Another camper, Fred Stone, became the first deaf high school referee in Georgia.

"The biggest impediment for me is not the talent of my athletes, it's the people who are unable to communicate with them and therefore won't give them equal opportunity," Glenn said. "The opportunities are better now but still not what they should be."

Glenn's Father's Day tradition could be kept alive by his son, Michael Justin Glenn, who is 15.

"He comes to the camp and he enjoys it," Glenn said. "Some of the same things that happened for me are happening for him. He helps me plan. He comes and keeps the scorebook. I would love to see that be part of my legacy to him."

On the Web: www.mikeglenn.com

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