

# Nuggets reps help dedicate new Boulder basketball court

## Basketball clinic, Rocky mascot appearance among event highlights

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Former University of Colorado basketball player Jamie Miller recently learned that if you take away a Boulder community's basketball hoop, you'll have to answer to the kids.

"We thought nobody was using it," he said. "We moved it to another (Boulder Housing Partners) site we felt had more kids that would use the hoop, but we underestimated what the response would be."

Miller, now an architect working with Boulder Housing Partners to provide recreational facilities for Boulder communities, was "swarmed" by kids demanding to know where their hoop had gone. This inspired him to plan a court for the Kalmia apartments in north Boulder, as well as replace the hoop he had taken away from another site.

"We decided Kalmia was the best location to attract the most kids," said Miller. "Before the court was there, the kids only had outdated playground equipment."

On Saturday, a truck pulled up to the Kalmia apartments and unloaded "Rocky" the mountain lion -- the official mascot of the Denver Nuggets. Rocky joined former Denver Nuggets center Ervin Johnson and members of the Nuggets dance team to officially open the new court to the public.

"To see these kids pick up the basketball and come together is so rewarding," said Miller. "You sometimes forget how exciting it was to be a kid. When Rocky and Johnson showed up, the kids reacted like they had just seen Bruce Springsteen."

The new court, adorned with the Nuggets blue, white and gold stripes, was a collaboration among the Boulder Housing Partners, Denver Nuggets and Sport Court of Colorado, which donated the court. The event was also attended by the I Have a Dream Foundation of Boulder County, a school dropout prevention program, and the Boulder Youth Service Initiative, which provides organized activities for public housing communities.

More than 100 kids ages 6-16 and their families attended the dedication, which included a basketball clinic led by Johnson, a community ambassador for the Nuggets.

At 6 feet, 11 inches tall, Johnson made it possible for even the shortest kids to experience a slam dunk by raising them up to the hoop. When he wasn't "swarmed" himself by kids waving headbands and basketballs they wanted autographed, Johnson showed them some techniques he learned in the NBA.

"This court is a wonderful addition to our vision of having all of our housing projects be enriched with recreational services," said Betsey Martens, executive director for Boulder Housing Partners, the city's housing authority. "When the Nuggets leave the court, I think it will still be covered with kids."

Residents of the Kalmia apartment complex were thrilled at the court's opening, and spent the afternoon watching their kids test out the new hoop. Maria Aguiarrrae, who has lived at the complex for a year, watched her two daughters, ages six and four, play on the court. The event even brought back former Kalmia residents.

"You don't see many things being built for kids anymore," said Longmont resident Rudy Osornio, who attended the dedication with his fiancée, a former Kalmia resident. "All you see are new banks or another liquor store. It's nice to see them put something up like this."

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