

# These Athletes Shun Idolatry, Point Kids to Jesus

Kids who meet Mark Wright learn everything he has to teach them about hunting and football. But most importantly, they hear about the everlasting love of Jesus Christ.

Wright, founder of the Florida-based Idols Aside Ministries (IAM), reaches the lost and fatherless in his community through sports and the outdoors. He and his team invite 500 children and youth from local churches, foster care programs, schools and orphanages to attend IAM's annual hunting retreats, baseball and football clinics, and wakeboard camps scheduled throughout the year.

Then, using IAM's platform to build God's kingdom, Wright brings in Christian professional athletes such as New Orleans Saints quarterback Luke McCown, Corey Lynch of the Indianapolis Colts and Nashville Predators forward Mike Fisher to mentor the kids.

"These athletes don't want to be idolized. They want to point these kids to Jesus," says Wright, who played college football at Appalachian State University.

Wright says he's seen so many abandoned and hungry children and hurting families who need a weekend away from life's struggles to be nurtured. At IAM events, participants enjoy the great outdoors while learning about the gospel through devotionals and corporate worship with staff and volunteers.

"We've seen kids who have been through just hellacious situations become free in Christ," he says.

IAM recently purchased 92 acres to build a lodge that will enable the ministry to host more retreats without having to rent facilities. Wright hopes to increase the number of

participants through this new retreat center while providing a place for mothers to be pampered as their children participate in the programs to learn about the Creator and explore His creation.

“It’s been powerful to see what God has done,” Wright says.  
“When we’re obedient to God, He paves the way.” –*Sarah Breed*