

## Using sports to meet community needs

### EHS's Welch reaches children through soccer

February 26, 2005

By **RON COX**

Index-Journal sports writer



Jeremy Welch was given a task when he left last summer's Emerging Public Leaders program at Furman University.

The Emerald High School senior, like the other 12 members of the program, was asked to develop and guide a project that addresses the needs and interests of his community. Welch wanted to incorporate one of his athletic passions, soccer, into his project.

So, Welch — a member of the Vikings' 2004 state championship boys soccer team — decided to put together a free soccer clinic for area youngsters, getting together some of his Emerald teammates along with a couple of Greenwood players.

"A lot of the kids haven't experienced the sport," Welch said. "I could have done baseball or basketball, but I thought the kids would want to grab on to something new. "There are kids in that area that don't have the opportunity to go to soccer clinics. There are places like the Y(MCA), but I found that some of them can't find a way to get over there."

Welch's fourth and final two-hour clinic for children aged 6

Emerald High School's Jeremy Welch practices a kicking drill with a group of girls during one of his Saturday soccer clinics behind South Main Street Baptist Church.

to 10 will start at 1 today at the fields behind the South Main Street Baptist Church.

Those wanting to attend can sign up at Miss Ann's Fried Chicken or call Welch at 229-7668.

Space is limited.

"As much as I'd like to open it up to everyone, we have to limit the number of kids because of coaches and extras," he said.

To complete his part in the Emerging Public Leaders Program, which is designed to provide leadership development and opportunities to prep seniors, Welch will return to Furman in March.

He will give a presentation on his project.

The Emerald senior opened his South Main Street Community Soccer Clinic Feb. 5 with the idea to teach primarily the basics of the sport at all four camp dates.

But when the number of children ballooned from five the first Saturday to almost 30 on the second, he knew he'd get to go a little further in his lessons.

"The main thing I wanted them to get out of it was to teach the basics," Welch said. "But even though most of the kids haven't experienced the game before, some of them have picked it up well.

"I've been really surprised with how quickly they've taken to the ideas of the game and how much they wanted to do this."

He was also surprised how much he wanted to do this as well. Welch enjoyed his time putting the clinic together, doing everything from setting up the field to play on to getting friends together as coaches to handing out leaflets up and down Phoenix Street.

"It has affected me, maybe more than it did, than the kids," Welch said. "I understand why people do public service and community service work for a living. It's made me want to help people."

The senior's positive experience working with the youngsters has even affected how he's setting up his life over the next four years.

"It has affected what I'm going to do in college next year, whether it's my major or simply doing extracurricular activities," Welch said. "I'm going to talk to some people over the summer, because I want to set up something over the summer, and not just with soccer."

Ron Cox covers prep sports for The Index-Journal. He can be reached at: [ronc@indexjournal.com](mailto:ronc@indexjournal.com)

**Back to Sports News**

Front  
AP Wire  
Sports News  
Opinion  
Accent  
Classifieds  
Obituaries  
Weddings  
Archives

Staff Directory  
Retail Rates  
Classified Rates  
Online Rates  
Subscribe

### County Links

Greenwood County  
Abbeville County  
McCormick County  
Saluda County  
Greenwood Chamber  
McCormick Chamber  
Abbeville Chamber

### School Links

District 50  
District 51  
District 52  
Abbeville  
Saluda  
McCormick  
Cambridge Academy  
PTC  
Lander  
Clemson Extension