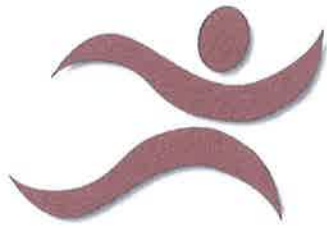


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Fun Staying Young

By Justin Graves Sports Writer

Posted: Saturday, June 21, 2014 10:17 pm

The Decatur Daily



Jeremiah Castille, center, oversees a drill Friday at his football and character camp in Decatur. Young at heart. Jeremiah

Castille believes he fits the label. The former Alabama football star at least looks, and acts, the part. These days, Castille's hair has faded a light shade of grey. There are a few extra wrinkles and lines around the eyes. But any real signs of aging? "Being out here around all these young people keeps me young," Castille said with a wide smile. "I've found something that makes me happy, and man oh man, doing something that makes you happy and keeps you going."

During the weekend, Castille, who starred for Alabama in the early 1980s, and then played six seasons for the Denver Broncos from 1983-1988, was in that happy place - clearly in his element. The venues: A church. A football practice field. Then a fellowship steak and chicken dinner with friends, both new and old, before hitting the sack for a few hours of sleep.

Castille was in Decatur this weekend, hosting a football skills and character camp. The two-day event concluded Saturday. Student-athletes attended the camp free of charge. Camp coaches were compensated through sponsors with help from Central Park Baptist Church. Castille now is on his seventh year of hosting football skills and character camps, but until this summer, the others were held in Cullman. This June, the camp was expanded to three sites - Cullman, Decatur and Cedartown, Ga..

Messages

"You never know how a kid will respond to messages we have," Castille said. "We've had

a lot of success with this. It's been a lot of fun for me, but getting an opportunity to see young people respond to the messages our coaches have, and do something positive with their lives, that's what this is all about."

Now that Castille's playing days are finished, and his children are out of the house and finished with college, the former Crimson Tide star has been committed to mission work - spending his time passing down religious faith-driven messages and working for charitable causes. Castille serves as a chaplain for Alabama's football program, where his sons Tim and Simeon also played. He also oversees his charitable organization, the Jeremiah Castille Foundation. And now, for a few weekends during the summer, he plays the role as football skills coach with plenty of life lessons, and advice, to go around.

During the two-day event, young football players from across the area received instruction on how to properly do NFL combine drills, and former Auburn track star, and U.S. Olympian Willie Smith, helped provide speed and agility training. "There's a lot of good knowledge being handed down," Castille said. But at this camp, football was just one of the themes. Building off-the-field character skills, with plenty of life lessons from the camp instructors, was in the limelight.

While meeting with his newest group of camp coaches Friday afternoon, Castille made his priorities clear, addressing the group like a fiery lead the determined to impact someone attending the camp. "You never know how a message will impact someone," Castille said with authority, while addressing the group of coaches, consisting mostly of former college players. "The message you have, and how you present yourself, might be the most impactful thing of their lives. You never know. If you aren't wholeheartedly committed to this, then this might not be for you."

Camp coach Justin Brown, a former Athens High and Miles College standout wide receiver, heard Castille's message loud and clear. "We're here to motivate young people, physically and spiritually," Brown said. "This is going to be fun, great thing, for both the kids and us coaches." Paying it forward. For Castille, the concept has become an important aspect of his life. According to Castille, former Alabama football coach Paul Bryant had a positive impact on his life - both on and away from the field. "And that's the main reason I do this," Castille said. "Coach Bryant helped me become the person I am today. He believed in me. He helped me. And now I want to do the same for others."

Contact Justin Graves at 256-340-2460 or by email at jgraves@decaturdaily.com.

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We Love Honey

Faith before Football: Jean Castille and her husband minister to a growing circle of family and friends



Caleb and Jean Castille (by Caleb Chancey)

With her husband and sons deeply connected to the Crimson Tide, Jean Castille understands the passion that surrounds college football. But football is not first in Jean's life-not even close. Faith and family are the foundation of a life she says she lives "deliberately." Jean's family with husband, Jeremiah, extends beyond their six children to include friends and mentees who have shared their home and their hospitality over the years. Jean-who does not hesitate to begin lunch at a local restaurant with her head bowed in prayer-wears an easy smile despite a hectic life filled with foundation and family activities.

Her story begins in the projects of Phenix City, where she was raised by her mother and grandparents, the youngest of seven children. "They took us to church, and they taught us the right way to live by example," she says. A new friend helped her develop an even deeper connection to God-Jeremiah Castille, then a high school senior planning to head to the University of Alabama to play football. The pair began dating when Jean was a high school freshman. "Jeremiah came along and was able to encourage me in my walk with the Lord," Jean says.

After he went to college, they remained friends, and Jeremiah became involved in campus ministry activities. During Jean's freshman year of college at Jacksonville State University, the pair began dating again, and attended a Bible conference in Florida together. That conference, she says, is where she forged a deeper relationship with God. "I had always been a believer," she says, "but I made a stronger commitment." That commitment is a foundation of the partnership Castille has with her husband. The summer after the Bible conference-and two weeks before Jeremiah began football camp with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers-the couple married. "When God called him, he called us as a family," Jean says. A football career brought Jeremiah success-but it also brought the couple closer to their life in ministry.

Jeremiah's six-year NFL career took him from Tampa Bay to Denver, where he is perhaps best known for stripping the ball from the Cleveland Browns' Ernest Byner in "The Fumble," a pivotal play that assured the Broncos a spot in 1988's Super Bowl XXII. While Jeremiah was busy with his football career, Jean was busy raising a family.

Their first son, Tim, was born in 1984, and Simeon arrived about 18 months later. Four other children followed.

Jean says her husband was a hands-on father, despite his schedule. And when he retired from playing football, the couple continued to raise their children in Alabama, where he became a coach. Castille's children attended Briarwood Christian School in Birmingham, where Jeremiah coached track and football, but off and on over 12 years she home-schooled each of them. "I felt like it was important for each of our kids to spend time with me," she says, noting that in the 1980s it was still an unusual choice to homeschool.

Raising six children was a tough task, but the Castille sons and daughters attest to their mother's strength. Son Simeon, who also played in the NFL, jokes that he was the worst of his mother's children. "On average she would have to spank me three times per day," he says. "The love my mom showed me despite how I acted is what I look back and remember most. All of the times I went to the principal's office, the fights with my sister, making my teachers cry, she still let me know that she loved me unconditionally." Any discipline problems aside, all of the children followed in their father's footsteps to study at Alabama, with all three boys playing football for the Crimson Tide.

Tim-who now has a master's degree in sports management and spent time as a graduate assistant for Alabama coach Nick Saban-and Simeon both played in the NFL; daughter Leah earned her master's in social work and is a counselor; and the youngest three, Rachel, Caleb and Danielle, remain students at Alabama. Caleb was a walk-on at Alabama and now is pursuing work as an actor and model, and Danielle is

planning a mission trip to Tanzania with Give International.

And over the years, the Castille home became the center not just for their family but for a ministry that has touched lives across the city and state. "(Jeremiah) knew early on that there was a call in his life," Jean says. "He was always more serious, more goal-oriented. He was more drawn to the things of God." The Castilles' ministry began to grow organically, with weekly Bible studies in their home, marriage counseling sessions with friends, mentoring at-risk teenagers, who Jeremiah often met while coaching youth sports teams. Often, Jeremiah would invite a young man to stay at their home, removing him from the kind of tough situation in which he himself had grown up. "That's how our ministry kicked off," Jean says. "We always felt like our house was God's house."

And as the Bible studies and counseling sessions grew, Jeremiah and Jean decided to form the Jeremiah Castille Foundation in 1999. The foundation runs Character Camps for young athletes, focused more on their personal development than on football, as well as marriage seminars, Bible counseling, motivational speaking and other activities. Jeremiah is also chaplain for the University of Alabama's football team.

And those weekly Bible studies still meet in the Castilles' Birmingham home. Ashley McGee is at the Castille home at least twice a week, for a women's fellowship and Bible study. Jean made McGee meals when her baby was born, offered baby-sitting and even paid some bills for her family along the way. "She is always putting others first before herself. She sees the best in everyone; no matter what, she is always telling me and the other ladies she mentors to love people," McGee says. "She is a true mother, not just to her kids, but to the community. She continuously is giving her time, talent and financial resources to others. She sees motherhood as a calling from God and takes it seriously. She has been such an inspiration to me." The McGees, in fact, have started their own ministry in Birmingham, None Suffers Lack, and the Castilles serve on its board. For the McGees and others the Castilles have mentored, the line between friends and family is blurred. "It was like we were their kids as well," McGee says. "They did not treat us any different just because they did not birth us. When I needed advice on certain tough life decisions, she was there guiding me through."

Sharing their home over the years with a few extra teenagers was simply a way of life for the Castille children. "My mom has a heart of gold," oldest son Tim says. "Not only did she put up with her six kids, but after we moved to Birmingham there was rarely a moment where we didn't have someone living with us. She always wants to help people that are trying to better themselves and their situation. My mom should have had an empty nest two years ago when my youngest sister went to college, but they had two other young men that she and my dad were mentoring." When Tim's wife,

Dee, was pregnant with their first child and nursing her mother through cancer, Jean dropped everything to come to her aid. "My mother-in-law, without any hesitation, put my needs in front of hers and flew 1,700 miles to be by my side," Dee says. "Jean spent a week at the hospital loving on my mother and me before my mother passed." Tim and Dee have two daughters, who call Jean "Honey" and enjoy princess parties and sleepovers with their grandmother. But if you ask Jean, she will tell you she has three grandchildren. After Dee's mother died of cancer, Tim and Dee's niece began to stay with Jean during the day while her mother, Dee's sister, works. Adopting the single mother and daughter into her already-large extended family was simply a natural transition.

A few years ago, Jean began cleaning a friend's house as part of a reciprocal agreement; that grew to cleaning a few other friends' houses to make a little extra money. But even that job, for Castille, is a ministry. "I go through their houses and I pray for them and pray for their children," she says. "I love on them. They're like my family, my children. It's a blessing to do what I do and know that they appreciate it."

Amid all that Jean does for others, there is one activity she treasures for herself: tennis. Active on the court since she was a teenager, Jean remains competitive, playing in women's tournaments and teaching classes. A few years ago, a dream came true for her when daughter-in-law Haley, Simeon's wife and a singer, won a songwriting contest and a trip to California to meet Serena Williams. Haley says her mother-in-law was the natural choice to accompany her on the trip. The sport also allows Jean to spend one-on-one time with her husband. "Tennis has been a great way for Jeremiah and me to bond together," she says.

Making their marriage a priority is important for the Castilles. "We got married with the intent of being married forever," she says. "We do date nights, take vacations together." When Jeremiah travels with the Alabama football team as its chaplain, Jean often goes along-less so now than she used to. "For years I went to every last one of those games with him," she says. "Football has always been a big part of what we do, but it has not overshadowed what we were called to do ministry-wise." When the Castilles mentor young couples through their marriage ministry, they have 31 years of a successful union on which to draw their lessons. "We are so close," Jean says. "We are so glad to be married. For a lot of the young guys coming to our house, for them to see us together, that's a blessing." Now that many of the young men and women the couple mentored have grown up-and become productive members of the community-they still consider Jean their "spiritual mother," she says, calling or sending messages on her birthday and Mother's Day. "We call our house the 'open door community center,'" Jean says.

For the Castilles, inspiring their children-both biological and otherwise-to follow in their footsteps and give back to the community is part of their legacy.

"It's all about the next generation," she says. "They're going to pass that on. It won't die out. There are so many people that start out strong and don't finish well. We want to pour into other people so they have a strong foundation." Jean says she and her husband know their limits and take a break every now and then, but "stay connected to the vine. We are committed to being refilled by the Lord. "Jeremiah and I love people," she says. "Any way that we can come alongside the Lord and be an encouragement and help them, we can have some small part in their lives where they have more positive in their lives than negative. "We have lived our lives intentionally, glorifying God. We always say we want to live our lives with no regrets."

By Birmingham Magazine
August 01, 2014

Leaving it all on the Field

Athlete. Mentor. Chaplain. The Real Deal. The Untiring Life and Ministry of Jeremiah Castille

By: Al Blanton

The year is 1982.

The Alabama football team is bussed to Tuscaloosa County High School for an intersquad scrimmage in the sweltering gauze of August. Jeremiah Castille, the 5'10" defensive back staring down his last season with the Tide, is a leader among men who wear white tube socks and stocky pads in crimson-stained huddles. His 68-year-old coach, Paul "Bear" Bryant (who is six months away from his death bed), takes off his ball cap and erases the sweat off his crinkled brow with his shirt sleeve, and in that iconic graveled voice, tells his assistants to flee to the stands. I've got this.

"Coach Bryant made all assistant coaches sit in the stands during that scrimmage," recalls Castille. "He coached the entire scrimmage by himself. Every position. Did all the substitutions, going up and down the field for six hours. At the age of 68, Coach Bryant still had energy and enthusiasm. That influenced me to get up every day and live life to the fullest."

Three decades later, Castille is still frequented by memories of Bryant. Those phantom lessons learned so long ago have served as a foundation for his life and his ministry.

Today, the indefatigable Castille serves as the front man for The Jeremiah Castille Foundation as well as Chaplain for the Alabama football team. His cause and purpose is youth: talented, ill-disciplined, capable, troubled, brilliant youth. He mentors young men with T.L.C.-Tough Love to Character-and any colt that finds himself parked in Castille's stable will be fed with more grace and mercy than fire and brimstone.

Castilleism (borrowed from Bryant) says that leadership is to be demonstrated. Which means that the first order of business is an exercise in mirror-gazing. "Coach Bryant would tell us to go into our dorm room and look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself if you left it all on the field," says Castille. "To thine own self be true. If a man can't look in the mirror and be true to himself...well, I have to look at myself and be accountable to God and myself. Am I leaving it all on the field? It's challenging."

To help remain true to himself, Castille employs a healthy triumvirate of mental, physical, and spiritual discipline in his life. "So for me, I believe the mental, physical, and spiritual are all integrated and connected," he says.

That might mean working out with a group of youngsters at 5 a.m., running with an athlete who is trying to snag a college scholarship, public speaking, fasting, praying, or conducting Foundation "Character Camps" in the summer.

"The whole focus of our camps is to help middle and high school football players learn the importance of developing character," he says.

The two-day camps-which draw between 150 and 200 kids- are run similar to an NFL combine, except that the Gospel is presented on the second night at a host church. Castille has been hosting these camps for over 10 years in places like Cullman, Decatur, and Cedartown, Georgia.

"It's awesome to see young people come and respond," he says. "We get a chance to influence their lives with our camps."

But mentoring youth is never absent of challenges. "The biggest thing is getting them to understand reality. How the real world operates. For instance, our tagline in our camp is energy, effort, and enthusiasm. What kind of work it takes to be great at something," he says.

Castille points to television and the Internet as the blade of illusory advertising for today's young athletes. "The Internet allows kids to see salaries. LeBron, some of these head coaches, and how much money they make," he says. "What they don't see is the preparation. LeBron didn't just wake up and become the best basketball player in the world. So we teach energy, 110% effort, and being enthused about it."

Over in Tuscaloosa, Chaplain Castille finds a sense of hope for Generation Yers in Coach Nick Saban, as well as two former players whom he describes as the "real deal."

"Coach Saban works with the kids at Alabama, getting them to realize that they are role models, whether they want to be or not," Castille says. "Two other guys come to mind-Barrett Jones and Carson Tinker. Those two guys are tremendous role models. For Tinker, I think it goes back to how he was raised. The mettle being put in him as a child made him who he is. I mention these two guys because the media makes you think there are no good role models."

Addressing the "plight" of today's world, Castille lends a bit of steely wisdom to whether or not the needle of morality is moving toward evil or good. "I don't get caught up in how the world is moving. There's no new sin under the sun. Sin is sin," he says. "I go with what the word of God says. As days get closer to the return of Jesus, it's gonna get darker. So that means the light of God's people should shine even brighter. I try to concentrate on doing what Matthew 28 says, 'Go into the world and make disciples.' I try not to focus on what the world is doing, but what God is doing."

That said, Castille does believe that Christians should ready themselves for greater persecution. "It's part of being a believer. The constitution gives me the right to verbalize what I believe just as it gives someone else. I should be able to communicate what I believe, just like someone else," he says. "Do I believe that's being threatened? Yes! Tremendously. It's gonna get worse, but to what extent, I don't know."

So how does a Christian effectively communicate the Gospel in a world that is increasingly hostile to Christian witnessing?

"It's not something you push down people's throats," Castille says. "It's a way of life. How we live speaks very highly; it communicates the Gospel. What's gonna attract the younger generation? It's not words, it's our lifestyle. I have a friend who cuts my hair, and he has this saying. He says, 'Preach the gospel, and when necessary, use words.'" (Francis of Assisi would be proud).

So, Castille continues to run with young men, not because there's dormant hope to get back to the glory days, but because he believes that's what leaders do-"I can tell you how to do it, or I can show you how to do it." Castille comes at those he mentors with a "spirit of gentleness" instead of a judgmental eye, understanding that "if you've got skin on, you've got stuff"-including him.

That's the spiritual aspect. Physically, the 53-year-old runner still looks like he could suit up for the Buccaneers-veins branching out of his forearms, shoulders like kettle

bells-and cover MegaTron. He'll tell you he doesn't like pizza, but after a 21-day Daniel fast, me might splurge on a large pepperoni. Mostly though, he is careful about what he puts in.

While many former athletes will be reduced to fading stars after their athletic life, never again reaching those sweetish pinnacles of success and mirth, Castille shines more brightly than ever before. Perhaps this is because he was able to find purpose outside of football early in his career (young athletes should take note). "The transition for me versus the average athlete was different because what I did while I played football is what I do today: ministering to the players. Leaving football meant I had more time to be involved in that mission field. I was a Christian that just happened to be a football player. Football was the vehicle to minister, and a part of my walk with the Lord."

Having a Matthew 28 mentality means that Castille isn't making too many friends in the pits of Hades. "I want to win as many people out of this world as I can win," he says. That might sound awfully haughty to some-certainly not cottoning to New Age skeptics or looser theologies-but for the Christian, it is his call and aim.

As onlookers watch the Real Deal Castille as he zooms past, they might not readily notice the irony of his life. And this is where we find the good stuff:

As a player, Castille's job was to prevent players from finding the goal line. As a Christian, Castille's job is to help them cross it.

Stille Moments

A Quiet Time with God
Written by: Jeremiah Castille

BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

Hello JCF Partners,

I pray all is well for you and that this summer has been a great one. The summer of 2014 marked our 7th summer to hold JCF Football Character Camp in Cullman, AL. This year we also added the cities of Decatur, AL, and Cedartown, GA.

The Lord blessed me with football athletic ability and I developed that ability to the fullest by playing high school, college and professional football. Today I use it to be a BLESSING.

In Cedartown, former Defensive Coordinator at the University of Alabama, Coach Joe Kines, a Cedartown native, participated in our 2 day camp. Coach Kines really blessed the campers with his knowledge, energy and enthusiasm for the game of football. As I watched Coach Kines work with the young men, he encouraged them to focus on being disciplined as football players. I could see them listening to him very intently. He was able to influence them greatly. He was a BLESSING.

God has blessed you JCF Partner to be a blessing. I want to encourage you to look at your abilities and talents to see how you may be a blessing to others.

In Christ,
Jeremiah

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August 22, 2014
Austin High School
Decatur Prayer Breakfast
Decatur, AL

August 30, 2014
UA vs West Virginia Mountaineers
Atlanta, GA

September 6, 2014
UA vs Florida Atlantic
Tuscaloosa, AL

September 13, 2014
UA vs Southern Mississippi
Tuscaloosa, AL

September 14, 2014
Center Point Baptist Church
Scottsboro, AL

September 18, 2014
Golf Tournament
Pairing Party
Birmingham, AL

September 19, 2014
VST Celebrity Golf Invitational
Benefiting JCF
Eagle Point Golf Club
Birmingham, AL

September 20, 2014
UA vs Florida
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