

# The Virginian-Pilot

## The Helpers: Lakeland boys basketball team helps feed children during coronavirus pandemic

By [Larry Rubama](#) Mar 30, 2020 | 8:59 AM | SUFFOLK



Devonte Saunders grabs drinks out of the cooler as Calvin Williams hands out the lunches on Friday afternoon as the Lakeland high school boys basketball team handed out meals and gifts to kids at Hoffer apartments on Friday, March 27, 2020 in Suffolk, Va. (Mike Caudill / The Virginian-Pilot)

It's been a great year for the Lakeland boys basketball team.

The Cavaliers won a share of the Class 3 state title and the outright Class 3 Region A championship.

But its biggest accomplishment may have come off the court.

On Friday, members from the booster club prepared lunches and drinks. The players and coaches then handed them out at the Hoffer Apartments. Keeping in mind the coronavirus, the players practiced social distancing in helping feed kids from that neighborhood.

# The Virginian-Pilot

“With the coronavirus going on, we’re just trying to give a helping hand to the people who need it and even to the ones who don’t need it,” said senior Devonte Saunders. “Everybody deserves to get blessings from other people.” Lakeland coach Clint Wright Sr. got the idea after another group he’s involved with — Old School Classic Committee — gave away lunches earlier this month. “When we finished, one of the little kids asked me, ‘When are you coming back?’” he said. “That was a big deal because I remember when I went to school. My biggest motivation was the fact that I had a breakfast and a lunch. Then I knew all I had to do was have dinner when I got home. “So I saw some of me in those kids. I thought it would be a great opportunity for my guys to give to those in need. We know we can’t feed everyone, but we’re definitely going to try to feed a few.”

Senior Keimari Artis said he was excited when Wright approached the team with the idea.

“I was good to go with it as soon as I heard about it,” Artis said. “I wanted to know what else could I do for them. It feels good to give back.” Saunders said this also was a great opportunity to be role models. “We’re just trying to be a good example to the kids,” he said. “We want them to stay out of trouble like gangs and violence. We want to give them something positive such as basketball and helping other kids out. We need to influence our youngsters while we can.”

Wright said this won't be the last time they do this.

“We’re obligated to give back,” he said. “We’re going to find another neighborhood to give. We’re not going to let this thing go unnoticed in dealing with the coronavirus.”

*The Helpers is a new feature from The Virginian-Pilot and the Daily Press about people and groups who are stepping up to help others during the*

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