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Basketball tournament allows area youth to shoot hoops for fun

*By Denise Goolsby
The Indio Sun*

More than 400 young hoopsters participated in the 38th annual Desert Spectacular Basketball Tournament at the Indio Community Center and Indio High School on Saturday and Sunday.

The event, hosted by the Boys & Girls Club of the Coachella Valley, included teams from across the valley and southwest, including Los Angeles, Orange County, Fresno and Arizona.

There were four levels of play, including eighth grade and under, 10th grade and under and 12th grade and under boys and girls divisions, as well as a sixth-grade and under co-ed division.

"The tournament is geared toward affording the youth of the desert with an opportunity to partake in a high level of competition right here in our community," said tournament director Quinton Egson.

"It just helps us get better," said Marie Castro, an Indio High School sophomore and member of the school's basketball team. "It gives us a little more competition."

Martin White, Indio High's girls varsity basketball coach, was at the Indio Community Center as a spectator. He was watching his daughter, Jacquelynne White, a member of the Desert Storm travel team.

White said he wishes there were more events like this for the youth of the valley.

"It gives them a chance to play competitively, to learn the game and to see kids from different areas," said White. "It's a little more competitive than a rec league."

Tiffany Mata, a 2007 graduate of Indio High School and now a freshman at California State University, Northridge, was on the sidelines coaching the Indio Boys & Girls Club's sixth grade and under team.

Mata, who's been going to the club since she was 7 years old, came home from college for the weekend event.

"I just love working with the kids and helping them out," she said.

Palm Springs teams take first in tourney. Page 13
