

IHM mom's basketball league scores big

For one night, they're not moms.

Homework projects, clean uniforms and what to make for dinner are forgotten as they take to the basketball court at Immaculate Heart of Mary School. Instead, three-pointers and guarding against a pick dominate their thoughts.

It's such a welcome break that the league is celebrating its 10th anniversary, and the over-30 players have segued into over-40 athletes.

"I play in it, and the biggest reason is exercise," says Kathy Wolf, 40, one of the original league members. "You get out and sweat and have fun - it's fun; it's the one night we don't have to be moms. We get to go out and play."

She candidly admits she's not any good, but she's there for the camaraderie and the tradition of heading to Applebees afterward.

What keeps the Thursday night league fun and welcoming for the less athletically-abled is the league's structure.

Andy Pyzik, adult coordinator for the IHM Athletic Association, says teams cannot enter the league. Instead, moms from either the school or the parish at IHM sign up, and then the coaches have a draft and pick their teams. A mom can bring a guest, too.

That way, he says, "You don't get a dominant team that just wipes out the league. Some moms played college ball while others can barely dribble down the court, but the draft keeps the teams even. And league rules demand that every player must play at least 30 minutes; most teams sub every six minutes, "so everybody has to play regardless of the talent," Mr. Pyzik says.

Mr. Pyzik had started a men's league in 1993, and, he recalled, "in 1998 some moms came to me and said, 'You've had a father's league, why not a mother's league?' "

He agreed, and the league started with four teams of eight players. Within three years, it had grown to eight teams. This year, the league has six teams, and most of the players have been in it for more than six years.

Jim and Evelyn Carlineo volunteer each week to keep score, and Mr. Pyzik and Mr. Carlineo ref the games - although the fouls are hardly of NBA caliber.

"My goal every week is just not to get hurt," says Ms. Wolf. "Another one of our mantras is 'We've got to make lunches, ladies.' "

Wilma Short, the principal of IHM, provides space for the league; last year the mothers' and fathers' leagues combined raised \$3500 for the school.

Shannon Skopp, 30, a graduate of IHM, has been playing in the league for nine years.

"You come back and it's the same people all the time," she said. "What the people do the most is they go there to have fun." She praises Mr. Pyzik and the Carlineos for volunteering. "It's a really nice event that nobody has to do but everyone keeps coming back to do it," she said.