Lawson State's baseball team loaded with local high school players

When Blake was just five years old. Not so Lawson State.

"Our President, Dr. Perry Wedw, has no intention of dropping any of our athletic programs (men's and women's baseball, football and volleyball)," he declared.

"That's a major upgrade of our gym, locker rooms and weight rooms underway. This actually toutes education by attracting students and keeping athletes focused on staying eligible. This is really a great place to be."

He was not at all resistant to talk about the other components of his team's success: hard work.

"Our messengers," said 28-year-old coach who looks barely out of college, "our guys know they're going to work. I ask a lot of them. If you want to be good, you've got to work."

He paused. "And it doesn't hurt to have the talent to battle. Attitude is important. You've got to have some purpose for being here."

He meant that in the broadest sense, a commitment to a productive member of the community, to reach out and give something back. That's why he and his team at UAB Children's Hospital several times in the fall. He encourages those visits and the team members interaction with the kids to be an integral part of his baseball program.

"Once they are doing this, growing around the children's rooms, giving out presents, baseballs, playing games with them, it's like Christmas coming for or six times a year," he said.

The kids remember. The team looks forward to it. You've got to give something back. It makes us extremely thankful for what we get to do everyday."

The Lawson State Hill Park is one of the top five or four such facilities in the state. Admission to home games is free. For schedules, go to www.lawsonstate.edu.

The Lawson State baseball team which is currently ranked in the top 30 nationally of junior colleges. They are all from local high schools, McAdory and Pleasant Grove. Posing for this picture from left, Brent Butler, Seth Eagle and Matt Irwin are from McAdory, standing: Matt Alexander (Pl. Gr), from left, Ryan Brubady (Pl. Gr.), Head Coach Blake Lewis, Assist. Coach Louis Rojas, Aaron Marcus (Pl. Gr.), Brent Sivley (Pl. Gr.), Not pictured, Adam Rice. He got his time in the batting cage before the Shelton State game on Friday.

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The Lawson State Community College baseball team under second-year head coach Blake Lewis has just moved up to No. 20 in the latest NJCAA Junior College

Athletic Association poll.

It's an evidence of the remarkable success in the area. Lawson's team has earned a 22-7 record this year. That's a big turnaround from last year's 37-12.

Another part of the reason for the success is his training. Yes, he has players on his 31-member roster from all over the state, some from as far away as Miami and Texas. But 11 of the team are in on his crew are at Athens, seven of them coming from among programs in our local area.

Five are from McAdory; four are from Pleasant Grove. He's getting his name, maybe more of hometowns around.

"Speaking of which, it would not be inaccurate to call Blake Lewis 'Mr. McAdory' if one can. He grew up in McAdory and graduated from Pleasant Grove High. His father, Gary Lewis, is a current baseball coach at Bayside Academy. He introduced him to Little League when Blake was just five years old.

"Dad was there," he recalled fondly. "Coach me all the way to high school. "

His dream was to be a professional baseball player. When that didn't work out, I knew he wanted to be a coach. This summer, he was a coach of this first-ever junior college program." From a distance, you can't tell him from his players. He looks that young.

It was mentioned in his that because of sufficient economic resources several area junior colleges are having to cut back their athletic programs. Some will even be eliminating baseball next year. Not so Lawson State.