

# Y sees increased offerings as key to youth fitness

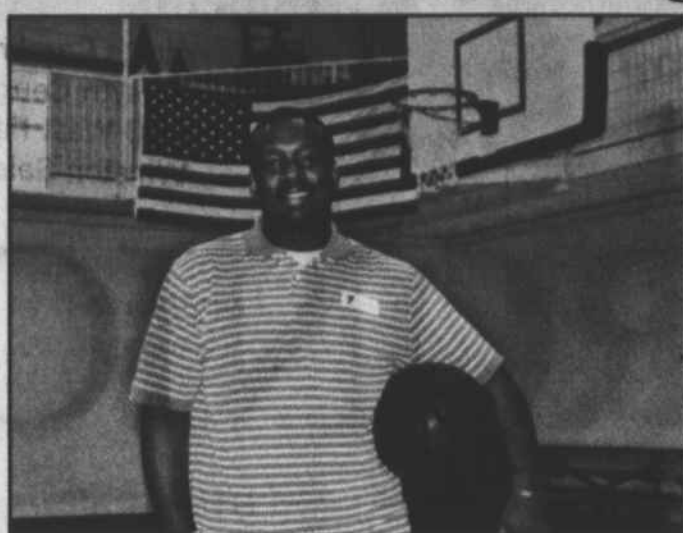
BY LAYLA GARMS  
THE CHRONICLE

In an effort to improve the health and wellness of the community it serves, the Winston Lake Family YMCA has hired its first-ever full-time youth and adult sports coordinator.

DeShaun Love, a city native, assumed the position on May 23.

"Our goal is to engage children and adults year-round in physical activity," said Winston Lake Y Executive Director Shawan Gabriel. "...It was time to have someone to dedicate solely to that."

Currently, Love, who played basketball at Glenn High School, oversees the Y's women's and adult basketball leagues; a modest soccer program that Winston Lake offers in partnership with other branches; and the YBA, which has taught countless youngsters the joys of basketball for decades. He is currently signing up kids for a volleyball clinic for middle and high school students that will be held on Thursdays from Aug. 16-Sept. 20. He is



DeShaun Love poses in the gym at the Winston Lake Y.

also working to expand the soccer program, in addition to adding softball and flag football to the Y's offerings.

The branch is also rolling out an outdoor cycling program, which Love will eventually oversee. Gabriel said he is excited about the new athletic opportunities the facility is beginning to present to its members and guests.

"The capacity for our branch to grow in that area is great," he said. "We just need-

ed someone with the desire to be the driver of that."

Love said he is hopeful that the diversity in programming could also increase the diversity of the Y's membership.

"I want to get out of the stereotype that this is a black Y," Love said. "This Y is for everybody."

Love's ties to the Winston Lake Y date back to his childhood, when he discovered his passion for basketball under

the tutelage of Y employee Linwood Skinner, who was a standout college player at the time. Love, whose mother Angela Love worked in the Y's childcare department, said he always felt like he belonged to the Winston Lake family. As an employee, Love said he has experienced the same supportive atmosphere that he remembers as a kid.

"It's family-oriented; everybody knows everybody.

People care about each other here," he stated. "They encourage me. They're very laid back. They make it easy for me. When I come in (to work), I don't feel stressed."

As a former athlete, Love knows that the value of sports goes far beyond a win or loss.

"It's more than just sports. It's building relationships; it's building that sense of family," he said. "A lot of my relationships, a lot of my friendships, were based off of sports."

Love hopes to promote the youth sports program as a healthy outlet for kids of

every color and creed.

"I think for young people, sports is a great way to build lifelong friendships as well as keeping them active," he stated.

"In our country, we're dealing with childhood obesity, and sports can really help deter that. It keeps them off the streets (and gives them) a safe environment doing something that they like to do around great role models and people who are going to steer them in the right direction."

A former teacher's assistant, Love said he came to Winston Lake because he needed a new direction.

"I love sports and I like working with people. It was a job that I could see myself

doing," said the 30-year-old. "I knew it would challenge me, and I felt like I needed a challenge."

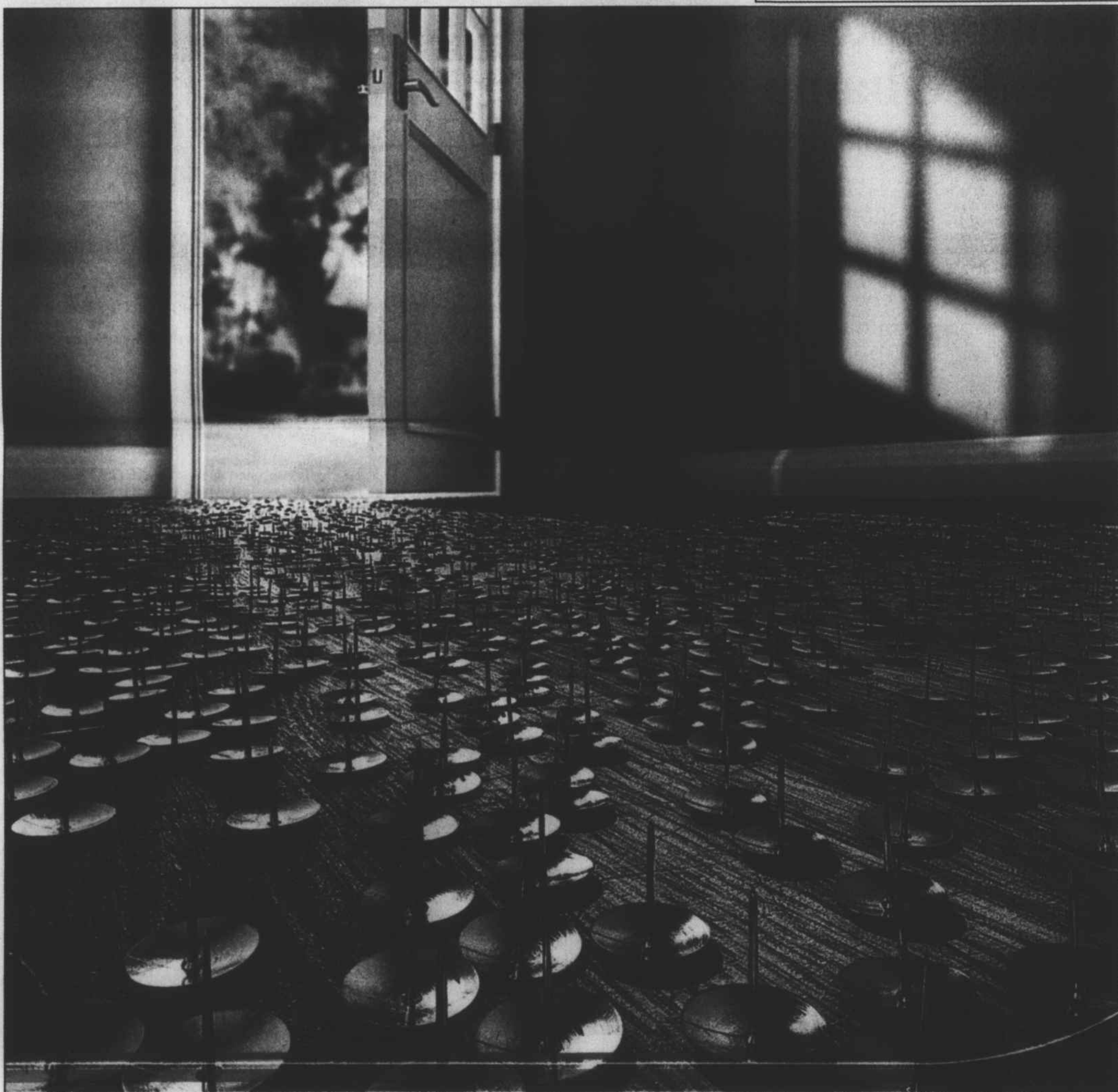
As sports director, Love hopes to use the platform of athletics to increase Winston Lake's presence and reach in the broader community.

"I want to get outside of the four walls and do things in the community and actually take sports to them," said the married father of one son. "I want people to see Winston Lake as not just a Y, but actually a Y that goes out into the community and makes a difference... We're a smaller branch so it's easier to touch people's lives."

For more information about sports programming at Winston Lake, contact Love, [d.love@ymcanwnc.org](mailto:d.love@ymcanwnc.org) or visit [www.ymcanwnc.org](http://www.ymcanwnc.org).

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