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HOOPS FAMILY IN ACTION

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STORY

STAFF

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ASHEVILLE — When asked how often she gets to spend time with both of her basketball-playing children, Brenda McCants jokingly answers "never."

Those moments are indeed rare, considering son Rashad McCants plays in the NBA and her daughter, Rashanda McCants, plays for North Carolina, one of the premier programs in women's college basketball.

So Brenda McCants cherishes moments like Friday evening, when Rashad and Rashanda were shooting baskets, joking around and hanging out at Bele Chere with other family members and friends.

Soon, however, Rashad will be playing in an NBA summer league, preparing for his third season with the Minnesota Timberwolves. And Rashanda will return to Chapel Hill for classes and her junior season with the Tar Heels.

"I'm just proud of both of them," Brenda McCants said.

Rashad's summer

Before basketball starts to consume his time again, Rashad McCants joined forces with the Mission Healthcare Foundation to raise money and awareness for breast cancer research with the Shoot for the Cure event at Bele Chere.

Brenda McCants is a breast cancer survivor.

"I wouldn't really want to do it anywhere else," Rashad McCants said of the event. "I don't really get to come back to Asheville too much so a good time to come back is summertime, and Bele Chere has always been my favorite."

McCants said he wants to stay involved with Bele Chere in the coming years. He also plans to launch a multi-faceted management company, Young, Black and Gifted, Inc.

After leaving town, McCants will play in an upcoming team camp in Las Vegas. He is looking forward to playing a full NBA season after he missed the first half of the 2006-07 year recovering from microfracture

knee surgery last June. He only played 37 games.

In summer league action earlier this month, McCants showed signs of why the Timberwolves made him a first-round selection in 2005. He averaged 13 points in five games.

McCants, who was a standout at Erwin High and North Carolina, said he is ready for the regular season.

"I don't really put expectations on myself," he said. "I just set goals and try to reach them, and basically that's to have a successful season and get to the playoffs."

Rashanda expecting big things

Rashanda McCants started all 38 games as a sophomore and averaged 9.4 points per game for the Tar Heels (34-4), who advanced to the Final Four last season.

McCants expects to be more of a leader since North Carolina graduated its top two scorers, Ivory Latta and Camille Little.

"I'm real excited," said McCants, who starred at Asheville High. "I'm growing as a player and as a person. And I'm just ready to see where it's going to take me.

"I'm definitely going to have to come in with a different mentality. Ivory and Camille were our seniors and the leaders of our team. I'm going to have to step up and take on that roll. But I'm fully prepared to do so."

McCants said the Tar Heels have a lot of potential with their combination of returning players and talented incoming freshmen, a group that includes Smoky Mountain graduate Cetera DeGraffenreid.

"I'm hoping everyone will tune in," McCants said. "It's going to be something to see."

Following the kids

For Brenda McCants, it has been easy to keep an eye on the family this weekend. The McCantses spent a lot of time in downtown Asheville supporting an event near and dear to the family.

"I'm standing here today a survivor of two years, and all I want to do is get the word out to other women to take care of themselves," Brenda McCants said. "So this is what it's all about: I survived. I want to help other women."

The McCants family moved to Durham two years ago to follow Rashanda's career. Still, Brenda and James McCants, her husband, will be watching both.

"We watched Rashad all the way up to the NBA," Brenda McCants said. "We get to see him every now and then. But right now we're supporting Rashanda to see her through to her next phase, whatever it turns out to be."

THE MCCANTSES

Father, James; mother, Brenda; son Rashad; daughters, Rashanda and Sade.

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