

To kick off his summer, senior Emmanuel Aligaz came up with the idea to create a basketball league with his friends. Seniors Trey Duckworth and Riley Underwood joined Aligaz in collaborating to start this league in an effort to ensure that all participants would have a great time over the summer.

“Me and my friends were just talking about it one day wanting to do a summer basketball league and we just decided to actually do it and that’s how it came,” Aligaz said.

Aligaz said people could create teams of three with an additional person as a substitute. All of the games were played to 21 in a bracket-style tournament that lasted through July. As the commissioner, Aligaz was there at every game to support his league.

“I helped organize the games and oversaw everything,” Aligaz said. Alongside Aligaz, Underwood strived to capture the memories on camera and display them on social media for all to see.

“I think the Morse league gained a little bit of local notoriety within Johnson County after creating the Instagram because people from all over were coming up to us and saying, ‘Oh hey, we’ve seen you on the Morse courts [and we] think it’s a really cool thing you guys are doing,’” Underwood said. It’s been kind of cool to see that grow and know that we’re helping the community out.”

As well as creating the Instagram highlights, Underwood designed a website with all the teams, their players, their stats, along with schedules for each game. By getting the players and the fans hyped, Morse League started blowing up around the community.

“I created graphics for when people broke records. Also, I made the weekly top 10 plays, which were a big hit with our fans and players,” Underwood said. “The Morse league was created and then it just flew. The sky is not even the limit. We can go higher than that and the best is yet to come.”

After the huge success of the league, Aligaz and Underwood partnered with Duckworth to turn this idea into a way to give back to the community.

“I was the deputy commissioner and the treasurer so what I did was basically I just helped Emmanuel with whatever he needed help with,” Duckworth said. “I was in track of the money, which we gave some to the winner and then we donated a little portion to Children’s Mercy.”

Duckworth said they had leftover money following the league so they wanted to make it worthwhile and give it to a charitable cause. Despite the time taken out of their summers, Underwood said he was happy with the outcome of the whole project.

“I hope that we helped people have fun with their summer and you know, we made the league, we’re keeping kids off the streets, we’re keeping kids out of harm’s way, and we’re making it all in a safe environment at a school,” Underwood said.