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By Tim Morrissey

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SYDNEY Spirit are using basketball's "street cred" to help at-risk kids get off the streets and reconnect with society.

The Spirit have with created a partnership with Streetworx, a Christian-based charity set up to help young people at risk of entering the criminal justice system through a mentoring program.

Streetworx founder Daniele Maisano believes the Spirit players will be able to connect with at risk kids through their passion for hoops.

"We are about help at-risk kids and basketball is a sport that works well in reaching out to them," Maisano said. "And I think street kids can relate to basketball's street culture."

Aaron Haynes, 17, one of Streetworx's many success stories believes the Spirit's involvement with the program can make a real difference to the lives of other troubled young people battling drug and alcohol abuse, poor self esteem, bully and violent and a broken home life.

"Basketball has got that association with hip-hop music and anyone can pick up a ball and play," Haynes said. "I think the Sydney Spirit and Streetworx can help create a brickwall for at-risk kids so before they walk down that path to self destruction we are stopping them."



Joint project ... Spirit players during a work-out at Bondi with Streetworx members including Jordan Paura in the foreground. Photograph: Phil Hillyard