

Gallup trainer getting boxing off the stool

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Kids travel all over for bouts

Joseph Olivas likes being in a corner.

It's a space where re-engineering and re-evaluating are paramount. During a minute between rounds, he gets to relay a lifetime of advice. Sometimes his words are simple: Lead with your left and keep your chin down and hands up and keep moving.

Olivas, 46, volunteers a few hours an evening to train up-and-coming amateur boxers at the nonprofit Lites Out gymnasium on Gallup's tough north side.

"Sometimes your reward doesn't have to be money," Olivas said. "My payment is when I see a kid develop in the ring from a young prospect to a real good prospect with a future. That's my payment."

Olivas, a former Oxnard, Calif.-based professional boxer and 1988 Olympic team boxer, arrived in Gallup five years ago and now owns and operates Ghetto Fabulouz and King's Barbershop at 108 E. Maloney Boulevard. The gym is situated in the same building that houses the thrift store and the hair shop.

"This is for the kids," Olivas explains. "I see kids with nothing to do here. I don't get paid for this. We go on bouts practically everywhere in the Four Corners and then some. And it keeps the

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kids out of trouble and keeps them engaged in something positive.”

Anywhere from three to a dozen amateur boxers from ages four to 16 work out and train at Lites Out on a daily basis. One of the amateur fighters that Olivas handles is ‘Ragin’ Ritchie Archuleta who has been a mainstay at Lites Out for the better part of two years. Archuleta, 14, won state last year in Los Lunas in the 90-pound Junior Olympics, but lost in the regionals. Next month, he’ll be in Phoenix for another shot at winning a regional bout. Archuleta was ranked No. 1 in New Mexico last year in the 13-year-old, 75 pound weight class.

“I just like boxing,” Archuleta said. “I like Sugar Ray Leonard. I like boxing a lot. I want to work hard enough so I can fight as a professional one day.”

DeWayne Yazza, 13, is a relatively new fighter at Lites Out, having just about four months of training under his belt with Olivas, but still with a 1-1 record in the ring. Like Archuleta, Yazza is an eighth-grader at Gallup’s JFK Middle School and is classified within the (amateur) Novice Division.

“I like boxing and I like coming here,” Yazza, who fights in the 100-pound class. “I come here after school. I plan to come here as much as possible.”

Olivas said being straightforward with his fighters is the key to being a good trainer. He said there are a lot of positives connected to the sport. He said he’s constantly looking for sponsors to assist with things like equipment purchases and travel expenses.

“If you give kids a half truth, you’re only giving them a half effort,” Olivas said.

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