Club Volleyball Team Looks South for Competition

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

The high school volleyball season wrapped up in November, but that hasn’t kept a group of athletes from playing. Since April, the Kodiak Island Volleyball Club has met six times a week to workout and practice. Next week their hard work will hopefully pay off when the girls head to the Volleyball Festival in Phoenix, Arizona.

Merissa Koller-Williams has coached the group for the last three months and said hundreds of other club volleyball teams from around the country will attend next week’s festival.

“It’s a much more significant event than just a tournament, since it involves four or five days of volleyball. There’s a big opening ceremony where everybody dresses up and there’s a grand march and the festival is very much about companionship. It’s about bringing teams together from around the world to get to know each other.”)

Koller-Williams said the girls were selected to play after last year’s volleyball season. The team is comprised of eight girls, ranging in age from 14 to 17. She said the initial intent behind participating in the festival was to improve the girls’ skills before next year’s season kicks off in August.

“A lot of these girls have just tremendous potential and we wanted to enhance that as much as we could. There will be scouts from all over the country at the festival. It’s a big event for them. There will also be athlete showcases that the girls can choose to participate in. Before the tournament starts they will have a chance to go out and demonstrate their skills for the scouts.”

The trip isn’t part of the regular volleyball season, so the team had to fundraise more than $13,000 to make it financially feasible for all the girls competing.

“It has taken a village to make this thing work. Between the parents and we had three coaches in here regularly, we had volunteer coaches who stopped in and we did lots of fundraising. So I guess if it’s OK I’d like to thank everyone that came

to our car wash and bought raffle tickets and came to our bazaar and bought baked goods and helped us in any way shape or form.”

As for the athletes, most are excited for the upcoming trip.

“Well it’s working out every single morning and having practice four or five times a week for the past three months. I’m looking forward to playing against competition and showing what Alaska can bring and I just really want to show how we’ve been working so hard. I’m really excited; I’ve never been to a volleyball tournament like this, so it should be interesting. I’m just hoping I can learn from this tournament. I am very excited to see how people in the lower 48 play. I’m a little nervous, but of course I want to impress everyone. It’s going to be a learning experience. Try to win. Go as far as you can.”

Opening ceremonies for the festival kick off on Sunday night with game play starting on Monday.