

Lack of Money May Close the Doors Forever For R.J. Reynolds-Funded Success Academy

By VERONICA CLEMONS
Chronicle Staff Writer

Success Academy has almost everything it needs for another year. Almost.

There are enough teachers and volunteers and there are more than enough students looking forward to another year of the after-school program. What it lacks is money.

The \$1 million donated by R.J. Reynolds at the program's inception is gone and unless supporters can find another sponsor, this year could be the last.

"It's not a good thing," said Lavonne Cooper, a Kennedy Middle School teacher who has been working with the program for four years. "If there's any way they can find the funds to continue, I hope they do that."

The program, which began in 1990, gives students a chance to work on various subjects after school in a more relaxed setting where teachers and other volunteers can help them in areas they need assistance. Students primarily get tutored in English and math.

Juanita Penn, the program director, said the school attorney, Douglas Pungler, will ask the Forsyth County commissioners and the city/county school board for funds. She added that applications have been submitted to organizations that help finance educational programs like the Nancy Reagan fund.

Students have also done their part by writing letters to commissioners and school-board members asking them to help. With some modifications to the program, Penn said about \$140,000 would fund the program for another year. That would mean reducing the number of teachers at each school from four to three. The sites include each of the 12 middle schools, four public-housing communities and the Salva-

tion Boys Club. If the number of teachers are reduced to two, then the cost could drop to about \$100,000, but two teachers at a site would be hard-pressed to handle the number of students who need assistance.

The program expanded this year to include the public-housing communities and the Salvation Army Boys Club as sites, in addition to the schools. Some of the students at Kennedy attend the site at Cleveland Avenue Homes.

This school year, the program has served more than 400 students

currently enrolled in middle school and there were some on a waiting list. Students may enter the program at their own will or parents may sign them up.

Brenda Gentry, who was involved with the program for about three years, said this is a good thing for the program because students can enter without any kind of stigma attached, which is a refreshing difference from other after-school programs.

The site expansion enabled the program to serve more students who

needed help. Gentry said because of certain circumstances, some students could not stay after school, so the program went to the neighborhoods.

Cooper added that by the program being in the neighborhood she could get to and where she knows students and their families, allows her to be more than a "one-to-one tutor." She worked at the Cleveland Avenue Homes site.

Supporters have until the next academic year begins to come up with enough funds.

Kennedy Students Enjoy What May Have Been Success Academy's Farewell Celebration

Tamika Oglesby, one of the R.J. Reynolds Success Academy essay winners, said she enjoyed being a part of the program. She had "fun teachers" and it was "fun learning."

"Steve Freeman, a Reynolds employee, said this year as a volunteer was just as enjoyable as the past three.

"We had a good time," he said. "They were there to learn and didn't mind being told what was wrong."

Volunteers and students at Kennedy Middle School celebrated the end of another prosperous year of Success Academy, an after-school program for middle-school students sponsored by R.J. Reynolds.

Some Kennedy students remained at school to take part in the program while others, who could not stay, participated at the satellite site at Cleveland Avenue Homes. They worked on homework and also got help with any subject they wanted.

Lavonne Cooper, one of the teachers, said in addition to doing homework and getting help in specific subjects, there would be reinforcement skills in subjects such as reading and math.

The celebration included eating pizza and other treats, awards, drawings and praise from teachers not only for the students' participation but for their dedication to the Success Academy program.

The essay question asked students where would they be without Success Academy. Answers included that they would be bored, their grades would be

worse and they wouldn't get the chance to meet new and nice people like the volunteers.

Mari Jo Guenzi was the other essay winner.

Teachers and volunteers also said the program was fun and planned to keep on volunteering.

This was Barbara Wright's first year but she said she is looking forward to another year of Success Academy.

Some teachers went further than academics with their involvement with the children. Cooper, who worked at the Cleveland site with Vanessa Gist this year, said getting involved with the children not only helped them academically, but also with their behavior. Cooper added that parents were really interested in how their children were doing. She said she often went into homes and interacted with parents as well as children.

"I got 100 percent cooperate from parents," she said.

The fun of the celebration overshadowed the possibility that the Kennedy celebration could be the last for the program, which has used all of the \$1 million donated by Reynolds for the program four years ago. Supporters are searching for funds to keep the program going.

"The program is at a crossroads right now," Kennedy Principal Norma Harbin said. "We hope someone will commit to the funding."

— Veronica Clemons

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Community EVENTS CALENDAR

May

How to Schedule Your Events: Send your information, concisely and neatly printed or typed, to the Chronicle Calendar, 617 N. Liberty St., Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102, before 5 p.m., the Monday preceding the week in which your event will occur. Our fax number is (910) 723-9173.

THURSDAY, MAY 26

9:30 a.m. — Reynolda House Museum of American Art will sponsor a city art tour led by Marjorie Northrup, assistant director of programs. The tour will include Diggs Gallery and downtown galleries followed by a picnic in Grace Court Park. The cost is \$22, which includes the bus and lunch. Call 725-5325.

N. Patterson Ave., will host a seminar called "Job Readiness." The seminar, led by James Lucas of the city's Personnel Department, is free. Call 727-2975.

ONGOING

• Senior Financial Care is offering a variety of in-home services to older adults of Forsyth County. They will help balance checkbooks, reconcile bank statements, write monthly checks and help with budget matters. Medical-insurance claims and drug charges will be filed and monitored to make sure all benefits have been paid. Call 725-1972.

• The city of Winston-Salem's Neighborhood Government Service office will host a seminar called "Can I Afford To Buy A Home?" on June 4 at 10 a.m. The seminar will be discussed by Jane Bodenhamer of First Union. The program is free. Call 727-2975.

• The graduating class of 1975 at Parkland High School will meet in the Anderson Center on June 11 at 10 a.m. The meeting will discuss the 20-year reunion in 1995. For more information, contact Jana Bristow.

• Neil and Camilla Wilcox will lead summer sessions for young people in creative writing and enrichment through art at Reynolda House Museum of American Art. The two-week long workshops for young writers in grades 5-10 will be June 13 and June 20 from 9 a.m. to noon. American Arts Discovery for K-5 will be on July 11 and July 18. Each session lasts one week and explores the Reynolda House art collection, gardens and grounds. The cost is \$95 and early registration is recommended. Call 725-5325.

FRIDAY, MAY 27

• Winston-Salem Housing Authority and Community Outreach will sponsor a "Unity Vigil" in Happy Hill Gardens, 6 p.m. - 12 a.m.; Piedmont Park, 6 p.m. - 12 a.m.; Cleveland Avenue, 6 p.m. - 12 a.m.; and Kimberly Park, 6 p.m. - 6 a.m. There will be singing, praying, preaching, testimonies and community walks. If case of rain, vigil will be inside community houses.

• Happy Hill Gardens Reunion Committee will meet every Saturday at W.C. Sims Center on Alder Street at 1 p.m. The meeting will discuss the reunion of Happy Hill Gardens, Columbia Terrace. The Trot and Salem reunion on July 9th. Call William "Rock" Bitting at 650-0858 or Ben Piggott at 727-2837.

SATURDAY, MAY 28

10 a.m. — The Piedmont Epilepsy Association will sponsor a "Chili Cookoff" at Oak Hollow Festival Park, Highway 68 (Eastchester Drive), High Point. Proceeds will go to the Epilepsy Medication Fund. The admission is \$2 in advance, \$3 at the gate. Children under 12 are free. No pets, coolers, containers of any type. Call 1-800-642-0500.

• The city of Winston-Salem's Neighborhood Government Service office, 2301 N. Patterson Ave., invites the public to the following activities on Thursday, June 2:
12:30 p.m. — "Summer Programs in Filmmaking" by Steve Montal of N.C. School of the Arts.
2 p.m. — "Controlling Blood Pressure" by Dr. Carlos Serrario of N.C. Baptist Hospital. These activities are free. Call 727-2975.

UPCOMING

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1

2 p.m. — The city of Winston-Salem's Neighborhood Government Service office, 2301

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