

Group says that North Carolina is a state of 'desperation' for many kids

Mixed report for Forsyth, Guilford in new study

FROM STAFF REPORTS

It's the best and worst of times for N.C. children, according to a report released last week by a state group that lobbies for the well-being of youngsters.

N.C. Child Advocacy Institute's 2000 Children's Index shows that even with increased attention being placed on child advocacy, "hundreds of thousands" of children in the state are victims of neglect and live in "desperation."

Research from all 100 counties in the state are included in the index, which examined 20 indicators of child well-being in four broad categories: economics, social, educational and physical. Levels of poverty, child abuse, infant mortality and educational proficiency also were gauged.

Forsyth County scored well in the index's educational indicators,

but not well with economic indicators. Forsyth outranked the state average in areas such as fourth-grade reading and math proficiency and per pupil expenditures.

are also growing faster than the state average.

Similar trends also are occurring in Guilford County, according to the index. Reported child

years, the county has had one of the highest infant mortality rates in the state. The index shows that the county is improving, but not as much as the state average. Infant mortality continues to be a problem for all of North Carolina, though, especially for non-whites. In 1999 for non-whites, about 15 non-white infants died for every 1,000 births, compared to only about five deaths for whites.

N.C. Child Advocacy suggests that counties that have recognized where their problems are and have aggressively tried to attack them have made positive impacts in areas such as infant mortality and child abuse. Improving the plight of children lies with the state and individual counties putting dollars and other resources into programs that attack the issues, according to the president of the N.C. Child Advocacy Institute.



On the flip side, child poverty in the county is growing faster than the state average, as is the number of people requiring food stamps to make ends meet. The numbers of child abuse and neglect cases in Forsyth County

abuse and neglect cases are getting worse and much higher than the state average. Child poverty is also a problem in Guilford.

The index showed some progress in Forsyth County's battle against infant mortality. For



Released last month, N.C. Child Advocacy's report gives most counties something to smile and frown about.

"If we want healthy babies, then we must invest in pre-conception health of women and in excellent prenatal care - not just in high-tech birthing centers, said Dr. Jonathan Sher. "Similarly, if we want to be a national leader in student performance, then we must first become a national leader in child well-being, not just high stakes testing. ... Our state is not exempt from the truth that

"you get what you pay for." The organization's study was funded by the General Assembly, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the Women's and Children's Section of the state's Health and Human Services Department and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. N.C. Child Advocacy Institute is a Raleigh-based, independent, non-profit, non-partisan organization created in 1983.

WSSU

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Division II regulations regarding the number of varsity sports the program must sponsor. The Rams offer football, basketball, track and tennis as varsity men's sports, and volleyball, basketball, softball and cross country for women. That would give them the required number of sports to meet conference and NCAA rules. However,

the Rams men's track team came short of the required number of athletes participating on the team. NCAA rules state that the team must consist of at least 14 members, who must compete in at least five meets. The Rams had only 13 on their men's track team this spring.

If that is the case, the Rams would have violated NCAA bylaws for participation in Division II sports and could possibly be placed on probation.

Calls to the athletic department at WSSU were not returned, but Dr. Martin said he has not heard of any concerns regarding non-compliance in the Rams' program.

"I'm not aware of any questions regarding our compliance," Martin said. "There have been no conversations at all regarding compliance. We've met all of our obligations where that is concerned. There is currently no inquiry on our campus and no one

from the CIAA or NCAA has made contact with us."

"This is the first time that I've heard this," Martin added. "I would have to consider anything contrary to that as uninformed conversation pieces."

Schools in the CIAA are required like all NCAA Division II members to sponsor a minimum of four varsity sports for men and four for women, according to Marcus Grant, director of

compliance for the CIAA. If they don't meet the requirements, they can face the prospect of being placed on probation for one year. Schools coming short of that total have recourse, however.

"If they don't meet the requirements, they have to make a report to the conference or the school can make a report to the NCAA," Grant said. "The schools can require a waiver in cases where sickness or economic reasons

prevent them from sponsoring all their sports."

CIAA teams recently voted to add women's bowling and women's tennis to increase the number of sponsored women's sports to six.

Grant said no school in the CIAA has been cited for non-compliance in the number of sports.

"It hasn't happened in the past and hopefully it won't happen in the future," Grant said.

Foster

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moved to Winston-Salem in 1996 to work at Winston-Salem State University. He currently works in community relations for Lowes Companies Inc.

Foster fulfilled a need to serve the city soon after arriving here. Foster is currently a trustee on the Senior Services Board and member of the city's Recreation and Parks Commission.

The run for aldermen, Foster says, is a natural progression in his still very strong desire to serve the city that he calls home.

"Since I moved to Winston-Salem ... I thought about ways I could serve this community," he said last week. "I think this run in the South Ward is the next logical step."

Foster, who received both his bachelor's and master's degrees from Virginia Commonwealth University, said he has become

very much grounded in Winston-Salem, although his stay here has been relatively short. He and his wife, Evelyn, a financial adviser, live in West Salem with Notorious, their retired greyhound race dog.

Foster says the amount of time he has been in Winston-Salem should not be an issue. He said the concerns he wants to address as alderman are universal, ones that people anywhere can relate to.

"Look at the issues people have in the South Ward: they want to make sure city services are being delivered; they want safe, clean neighborhoods. ... These issues are important no matter where you are," he said.

Foster also wants to fight for revitalization on Peter's Creek Parkway, a stretch that has seen more than its share of vacant buildings in the last few years. The Democratic hopeful also wants to join the fight for revitalization downtown. Foster believes

that because of the ward's proximity to downtown, revitalization efforts could only help the South Ward.

But the issue that Foster seems most vehement about is bringing consensus to the Board of Aldermen, something he says Robinson doesn't have the ability to do.

"The reality is, to get anything passed, it takes five votes," he said. "So you have to build some type of consensus in order to get anything done."

Foster, who turned 29 last week, said he has the youthful energy and optimism needed to get along with other members of the board and to get things done.

Robinson doesn't get many invitations from his fellow aldermen to dinner parties.

During his first term, Robinson has held up board meetings in order to argue for tax cuts and has sometimes lashed out at other aldermen for supporting items that he disagrees with.

Foster said he has never met Robinson face to face but has watched his antics in disbelief. He said Robinson could be doing more harm than good on the board.

"If outsiders or businesses (are) thinking about coming here, look (at board meetings) and see this behavior, that could be a real detriment to our community," Foster said.

When asked about his young challenger, Robinson was as stoic as ever.

"Bring it on," he said about the possibility of facing Foster.

Robinson said he remembers Foster coming before the Board of

Aldermen.

Robinson describes the event as "(Foster) asking for taxes to be raised." A Democrat that likes higher taxes will never fly in the South Ward, Robinson said, nor will talk of revitalizing downtown.

"He can't find five residents in the South Ward who like downtown revitalization. ... They have been trying to revitalize downtown for 53 years," Robinson said.

Robinson likes to point out the fact that he beat out several people four years ago when he was first elected to the board. He is relying on support from his base - police officers, firefighters and staunch Republicans - to make him victo-

rious once again.

He freely admits that he has not been the bearer of consensus on the board. But his constituency has respected his stances, he said.

"The people in the South Ward want someone who will stand up to the big boys downtown and not let the tail wag the dog. ... It's easy to get consensus when you are rubber-stamping everything."

Foster and Robinson said they plan door-to-door campaigns in July. The two still could face challengers in a primary. People who wish to run for aldermen may file from July 23-Aug. 10 with the Board of Elections.

King

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door events have a decidedly adult atmosphere, King bills V.I.P. as a family-friendly affair, featuring a mix of music genres from gospel and R&B, to reggae and jazz.

"You don't find what we do at these other events," King said. "When have (you) ever seen gospel at an outdoor concert?"

Last summer, one concert event a month was dedicated to gospel. The concerts proved especially popular among churches, many of which brought entire congregations to hear local and regional gospel acts.

King said the gospel events opened many doors for series. He was approached by a minister from First Assembly Baptist Church with an idea of using the gospel concerts as a way to bring congregations of various races together for an evening of music and fellowship. Several churches have already signed up to take part, King said.

"I jumped at the opportunity to bring churches out of their shells," he said.

King admits that he did not get the diversity he wanted during last year's concerts. He is making an extra push this year to reach everyone. He's even in talks with a Hispanic radio station in an attempt to appeal cross-culturally as well.

King's list of sponsors for the upcoming series reflects his desire to appeal to everyone. Among his sponsors are an R&B radio station, a hip-hop station and a pure-

ly pop station.

King said Winston-Salem Events' failed Pop Festival earlier this year reinforced a point that he has always believed in - if you want success, you must appeal to everyone.

"When you are doing something for the whole community, you need to market to the whole community," he said. "My marketing plan is to market to the whole, entire community."

King said he believes his initial series of concerts went well, but he already sees much more potential for the 18-week run of the new series. He is again

promising national acts at the end of the series, a promise that was made last year but not fulfilled because deals fell through.

"This is going to be better than what we did before," he said. "We have the experience under our belt from last year and that will help us a lot."

V.I.P. in the Park will begin this Sunday in Corpening Plaza (behind the green BB&T building). Gates will open at 4 p.m. Music will begin at 5 p.m. The concert will end around 9 p.m. Admission will be \$2 for adults; there will be no charge for children 10 and under.

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"I have discovered in life that there are ways of getting almost anywhere you want to go, if you really want to go."

- Langston Hughes

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