

Poster/essay contest promotes cultural awareness

BY PAUL COLLINS
THE CHRONICLE

A couple hundred people attended Crossing 52 Initiative's awards celebration for the winners of its annual poster/essay contest. The awards celebration was held Saturday afternoon at the Woodruff Center of Forsyth Technical Community College.

Crossing 52 Initiative is dedicated to

raising cultural awareness in the community, and the theme of the poster/essay contest was "One City, Many Faces."

"My parents teach me that racism is ignorant and people who practice it are ignorant," Isaac Knox, a sixth-grader at Thomas Jefferson Middle School wrote in his essay titled "What My Parents Teach Me About Racism," which placed third in the sixth-grade division in the

essay contest.

"I don't use past acts of racism to hate people who use it today but I do pray for them," Isaac wrote.

"My parents taught me to respect and honor the people, black and white, who were murdered, beaten, bombed, lynched, thrown in jail, and tortured so that I would have the opportunity to go to the best known schools and get the best known education that I can receive.

"My parents also teach me not to look down on people who are less fortunate than I.

"I am also taught that there is still a lot of racism today and that there are people who would try to stop me from being free and being a success in life. I won't allow this to happen. My parents teach me that my skin color is not something I chose, but it is what God chose, and as James Brown sings, 'Say it loud: I'm black and I'm proud.'"

"I thank God for parents that teach me not to hate people because of race, creed, color or religion. My parents teach me not to be a victim (to) racism but to be a victor over racism."

Lianne Jackson, a seventh-grader at Jefferson Middle School, wrote her essay, "Ali," about the Mr. Ali who was an energetic counselor in a YMCA after-school program that Lianne attended when she was 9 years old, in the third grade. "Ali was my friend, and I miss him a lot. I haven't seen him since third grade, and I still can't remember whether he is Asian or Hispanic. Perhaps I don't remember because, in reality, his race



Photo by Paul Collins

Second-grade poster contest winners, in no particular order: William Cox of Whitaker Elementary, first place; Savannah Herber of Moore Magnet, second place; Eloise Joubert of Whitaker Elementary, third place.

isn't and never was what matters to me. When I chased him around the gym, I saw myself chasing a wonderful person with a kind heart, not a person who was either Asian or Hispanic. When you really get to know someone, their race sort of disappears, and suddenly everyone is the same color. To me, Ali is a brilliant color that will remain in my heart until the day I die."

Lianne was awarded third place for

her essay in the seventh-grade division in the essay contest.

The awards celebration began with a welcome by Decoma Love-Lane, co-president of Crossing 52 Initiative. She said: "Students across the county have so impressively responded to the idea of 'One City, Many Faces.' One can only imagine the various processes of cogni-

tion is being planned, featuring 40 hand-painted plates created by area artists. Nigel Alston, an executive at GMAC Insurance, and Salem College President Julianne Thrift will serve as honorary co-chairs for the gala.

"We have tried to have something for everybody at the gala," Hayes said. "And we are encouraging everyone to come out and help in some ways to make a difference is someone's life."

The grand finale gala will start at 8 p.m. on April 20 and end at midnight. The event, which will be held at the Sawtooth Center, is free and open to the public. For more information on donating money or volunteering, call ACS at 777-0116 or HOPE at 722-5735. Forsyth Seafood Cafe will hold its Dining for Friends fundraiser all day Monday (11 a.m. to 9 p.m.) The restaurant is on Broad Street.



Photo by Paul Collins

Students in the Master Class at the Artistic Studio School for Performing Arts perform a dance routine to a CeCe Winans song.

AIDS

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April 20 at the Sawtooth Center to raise additional funds. Proceeds from the gala and the dinner parties will benefit HIV Outreach Programs and Education (HOPE) and ACS.

Hayes, who has held several Dining for Friends parties, said outreach efforts have paid off.

Union Baptist Church is among the black churches that will take part in Dining for Friends fund-raising. The church, through its AIDS ministry, is in the midst of a penny-collecting campaign. The results of the campaign will be presented at the gala, said Deacon Sammie Gray, who heads the ministry.

"The majority of the people being affected by this are black, so it is important that we be involved," Gray said.

Union's AIDS ministry has been a friend to the local HIV/AIDS community since the ministry's inception in 1997. Members of the ministry volunteer at Holly Haven, a care facility run by ACS. The ministry often prepares meals for residents there and chauffeur them around to various appointments.

"We have gotten beyond their illness and have gotten to understand them as people," Gray said. "Whatever they need us to do, we try to do it."

The ministry also has hosted Dining for Friends events in the past and just last month held an AIDS awareness forum along with Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

Gray said he has seen people within and outside of his church take more of interest in the issue of AIDS since the ministry first started. The ministry's membership has jumped from about 10 to 52, and Gray often fields ques-

tions from other churches interested in starting AIDS ministries of their own.

Charles and Virginia Hardesty also have been longtime friends of Dining for Friends. They own Forsyth Seafood on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and nearby Forsyth Seafood Cafe on Broad Street. For years they have sold their seafood at discounted prices to hosts and hostesses who plan to serve seafood at their dinner parties. This year, the Hardestys are taking their efforts a step further. They will donate 15 percent of their profits on Monday to the Dining for Friends cause.

"This disease really has had an impact on the African-American community. Our community is being hit the hardest," said Virginia Hardesty when asked why she and her husband decided to get involved.

She added that she does not believe blacks have "stepped up

the plate" as much as they can, but she said she has seen some improvements. The Hardestys' church, Goler Memorial AME Zion, is another black church that has opened its heart and wallet to the cause.

Goler and the Hardestys will team up to host a Dining for Friends fund-raiser on Monday as well. Patrons who usually stop by Forsyth Seafood Cafe for hot fish and fresh shrimp will be asked to contribute to the cause by members of Goler's AIDS ministry.

Susan Waynick, a member of Goler's AIDS ministry, attended a conference focusing on AIDS and the black faith community earlier this year at Emmanuel Baptist Church. She said she learned a lot about the disease and ways that people of faith can lend a helping hand. But she, like many who attended that meeting, was dismayed that most of the invited pastors decided to stay home.

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