

NASA

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just talking the talk. The agency has put its money where its mouth is. Over the past few years, NASA has partnered with more than 100 schools throughout the country to form so-called "Explorer Schools." The schools are designed to cultivate the next generation of space travelers. Teachers at the schools regularly attend training at NASA facilities, and NASA personnel have made Explorer Schools their second homes.

There are three Explorer schools in Forsyth County: Paisley, Philo and Walkertown middle schools. It was students from those schools who were on hand to hear Gregory speak last week.

Gregory said NASA is also working diligently to make sure that its employees at every level reflect the racial diversity that America expects to see at a federally funded agency.

Senior management is already doing well in terms of diversity, Gregory said. The agency has formed a number of outreach efforts with historically black colleges and universities to make middle management and entry level more diverse.

"We have a long way to go, but I think we are making progress. I think you will see a representative population in the agency that you would expect and I would expect," he said.

Gregory joined NASA after an illustrious Air Force career that included 550 air combat missions. He retired as a colonel in 1993, after 30 years and after logging more than 7,000 hours in more than 50 aircraft. But even with all of his extraordinary experiences, Gregory said his heart still beats a little faster with excitement each time he walks into NASA headquarters.

"Every day you go to work, it is like going to a playground," Gregory said, citing the many experiments and exciting projects that take place at the agency each day. But every day has not been a walk in the clouds at NASA. The agency has not had a manned space mission since February 2003, when the Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrated on re-entry to Earth.

After his address, Gregory told The Chronicle that the shuttle will return to space in February or March of next year. But he says the shuttle's days are limited.

"The space shuttle will be used almost exclusively to build the international space station, (which is) 40 percent constructed," Gregory said. He said the shuttle, with its large cargo departments, is the only vessel large enough to carry materials for the space station. In the future, a spacecraft that is more human-friendly and focuses less on cargo room will be designed and eventually used by NASA for space exploration, Gregory said.

Program helps foreign-born students

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

Since 2000, some 3,000 foreign students (800 this year alone) have come through the Newcomer Registration Center for International Students. Here, they and their parents learn everything they need to know in order to enroll in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system.

For some families, filling out an application or reading the bus and school schedules is tedious because they cannot read or write in English. While many of the students come from Latin America others hail from Russia, Greece and Africa.

Graciela A. Calles coordinates the newcomer program, which is housed in Kennedy Middle School, and she says it is the first program of its kind in North Carolina. The program is a huge help to students and their families who aren't acclimated to the American education system.

"We're the first point of entry for the students that come from different places or students who come from the United States but speak another language," said Calles.

Immigrant students in kindergarten through 12th grade who have not yet enrolled in school have their language skills assessed, documents translated, and their school and grade placements are determined as



Connie Harvey discusses a science project with a student in the Newcomer Academy.

well.

Parents are also given information on residential zones, school attendance rules, homework help, transportation, testing requirements and graduation requirements, and a variety of community resources.

In order to register a student, parents must provide identification, legal custody document, proof of address, birth certificate, immunization records and an academic tran-

script.

Out of the 47,342 students in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, 5,216 are Hispanics, 616 are Asian and 113 are American Indian.

Beth Donaldson teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) to students in the Newcomer Academy, also housed in Kennedy, which serves students who have recently arrived in this country but aren't fluent in Eng-

lish or Spanish. She says many foreign students can speak English but cannot read and write it fluently.

"What we're doing here is an accelerated program where we're trying to teach them study skills and prepare them for high school...The goal is graduation," said Donaldson, who spent a year teaching in Tokyo. She understands the feeling of being immersed in a new country and culture and unable to speak the language. Upon arriving in the region she didn't speak Japanese, but after time, she picked up the language enough to communicate with her students.

Some students, says Donaldson, have gaps in their education where they have not attended school on a regular basis. Many have missed consecutive grades and are not at the proficient level they should be when they arrive in the United States. The language barrier poses the biggest problem for most of the immigrant students. But once they develop their English speaking skills their performance is equal and sometimes greater than their American counterparts.

"They're in the same boat. They've all had gaps in their education, but they're very eager to learn," Donaldson said.

Homeless

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the task force will look like (members have not been selected yet) or how it will go about eliminating chronic homelessness in Winston-Salem. Malloy said the city is fortunate in that it is home to a number of agencies that have been fighting homelessness for decades.

"We are not starting from scratch," he said. "We are not going to try to reinvent the wheel. In Winston-Salem, we already have any number of transitional housing sites that are already in place."

Winston-Salem was one of 13 cities awarded a \$500,000 federal grant last week to fight chronic homelessness. The grant came from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOME Investment Partnerships Program. The grant will be used as seed money for the 10-year plan, the city said.

Philip Mangano, the executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, was in Winston-Salem last week to announce the grant and meet with local homeless advocates and city leaders. Mangano said Winston-Salem is the latest of many cities that are implementing long-term plans to battle homelessness. Short-term, Band-Aid solutions have kept the homeless problem alive for more than 20 years, he said.

"We want to invest in the lives of homeless people (in order) to end their homelessness," he said.

But Malloy says for there to be true success, the investment from the federal government will have to be much more substantial.

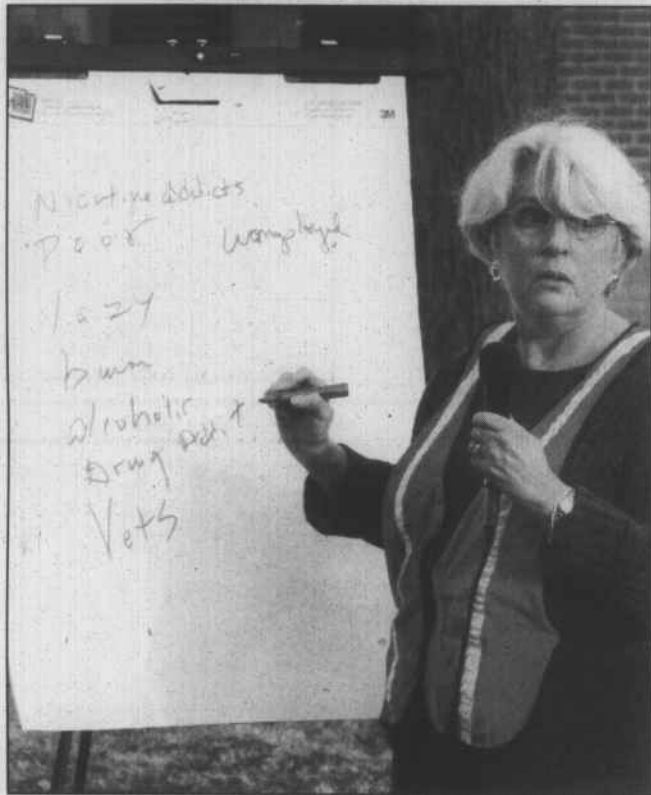
"The half a million dollars is good...but I think the funds are rather meager as far as tackling the problem. What we are getting here is almost like a drop in the bucket to put out a forest fire," Malloy said.

Mangano said more money for homeless programs could come as part of a program in President's Bush's 2005 budget called the Samaritan Initiative. Joines said the city will compete for more dollars to help its plan along.

"Getting this plan in place will help us be competitive for those dollars," Joines said.

Longtime local homeless advocates are cautiously optimistic about the plan and the federal government's commitment to help end chronic homelessness. Longtime homeless advocate Ginny Britt was among those who met with Mangano last week. She

Ginny Britt leads a workshop on the homeless at an event last month. Britt says to do away with the problem it will take real, concrete initiatives from the federal government and other entities.



pressed him about why the Bush administration is pushing to end homelessness while cutting federal housing subsidies, which make it possible for poor people to afford a place to live.

"That is going to put more people out on the street," Britt said after the meeting. "To me it is an oxymoron."

Mangano said hard questions should be asked related to homelessness, but he pro-

vided no answer to Britt's question. Britt said if any city can make a success of its 10-year plan, it will be Winston-Salem. She says the city's housing wing, led by Monica Lett, has worked with home-

less agencies in the past to make dreams realities.

She said a head count at local shelters recently estimated that about 33 percent of the homeless population is considered the chronic homeless.



Mangano

Call for Enhancements

The N.C. Department of Transportation's Enhancement Program is seeking grant applications for bicycle, pedestrian, beautification and historic resources projects. All proposals must include a general description and cost estimate. Suggestions must be submitted by May 19, 2004 to be considered.

Proposals should be faxed to (336) 748-3370 or e-mailed to wendym@cityofws.org

For more information about the Enhancement Program, go to www.ncdot.org/planning/development/Enhancement/

For more information call Wendy Miller at 727-2707. 

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