



Photos by Todd Luck

WSPA cheerleaders prepare to pump-up the crowd.

WSPA celebrates in-class successes with pep rally

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy (WSPA) held a loud and lively pep rally last Friday to celebrate the school's victories - in the classroom, not on the athletic field.

WSPA is a magnet school for grades 6-12 that specializes in getting students ready for college. A small school with a mostly African-American student body of only 475, WSPA has had a lot to be proud of as of late, according to Principal Richard Watts, who is proud that his school has had the county's highest graduation rate for the last three years.

While the average graduation rate in Forsyth County is 76.9 percent, WSPA's rate is 94.5 percent. For the last two years, WSPA has also met all of its Adequate Yearly Progress goals for No Child Left Behind and has become a School of Progress under the state's ABCs of Public Education.

Watts said the pep rally was held to remind students of last school year's successes and challenge them to do even better this year.

"I think teachers have a strong vision of what they want to do with the kids. I think students, for the most part, understand why they're here," he said. "You've got everybody on the same page, going the same direction... (then) the goal is attainable."

District Court Judge Denise Hartsfield was the rally's speaker. WSPA is located in the building of the original Atkins High School, where Hartsfield and many other notables like Togo West Jr., the former U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs, attended high school. She told WSPA students that they are walking on "hallowed ground."

"(It's) ground that has been treaded before by people who look like you, by people who have gone on to be giants in this community and in this world," said Hartsfield.

Though academics were being celebrated, all the elements of a traditional pep rally were featured, including cheerleaders, who performed before tossing t-shirt prizes into the crowd of students gathered in the school's gymnasium. A math relay that tested student's algebra skills and a contest featuring questions from the student handbook were also incorporated into the event.

Students responded enthusiastically as Watts asked them to repeat their goals for this academic year with him.

Junior Jaran Foster, 17, said that the type of enthusiasm displayed at the event isn't unusual at WSPA academic rallies, which can be even more boisterous than rallies held for sporting events.

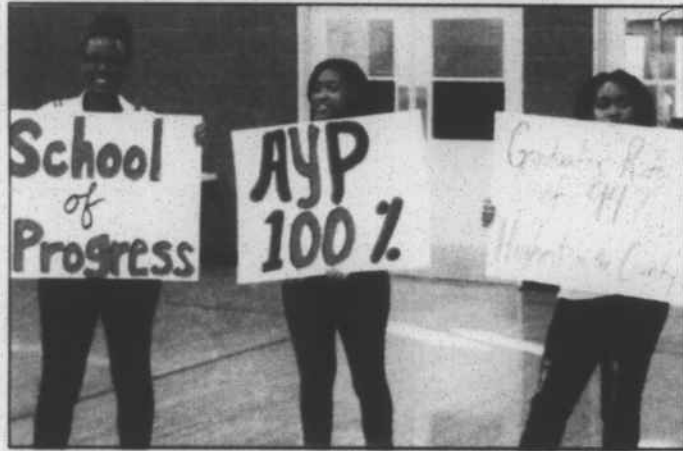
"More people are



Students ready their balloons for launch.



WSPA students Jaran Foster and Greg McClinton.



Students hold signs touting their school's academic accomplishments.

involved; everybody doesn't play sports," said Foster. "With academics, everybody's involved."

Sophomore Greg McClinton, 15, has confidence that he and his classmates will continue to soar. He said he chose the school for its academics and hasn't been disappointed.

"(I like) the small classroom, the attention you get from the teachers (and) the good relationships you have with people," he said.

At the end of the rally, students marched outside to release balloons that had index cards attached to them. On the cards, the students wrote down their academic goals.

Watt said the school's collective goal is to achieve 85 percent proficiency on the ABCs, which measures End of Grade and End of Course results. Reaching that goal would give WSPA the lofty title of "School of Excellence."

Last year WSPA, had the county's second biggest increase in reading and math proficiency, increasing 16.7 percent to 62.1 percent.

Watts said that the school's small class sizes, with a 12-to-1 student to teacher ratio, along with the hard work of students and staff, has turned the school's

proficiency numbers around. He also said that WSPA, which only offers honors and Advanced Placement courses to high school students, has a successful Saturday Academy and after school tutoring available to help students who fall behind.



Watts

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News Clips

Jaycees plan 'Farm' fundraiser for The Children's Home

The Winston-Salem Jaycees will present its 4th Annual Fun on the Farm from 6 - 8 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 22 at The Children's Home, 1001 Reynolda Road. The event benefits The Children's Home of Winston-Salem.

Festivities will include live music by Vel Indica, hayrides, a bonfire to roast smores, a silent auction, corn-hole and food fresh off the grill. In case of rain, there is an indoor location located at The Children's Home.

"The Children's Home represents many years of community service from committed individuals working toward fulfilling needs of underprivileged children in Winston-Salem," said Winston-Salem Jaycees' President Suzanne Ferguson. "Fun on the Farm is the Winston-Salem Jaycees' way of contributing to the historic institution of The Children's Home as it evolves to meet the needs of today and the future."

Tickets are \$5 for children ages four to 12; \$10 for adults; free for children three and under. Advanced tickets may be purchased at the following web site www.funonthefarm.info.

Cash, checks and credit cards will be accepted the day of the event.

Community Roots Day volunteers needed

The Community Appearance Commission, Keep Winston-Salem Beautiful, and the City of Winston-Salem are seeking volunteers to help plant almost 400 trees in the Happy Hill neighborhood on Saturday, Oct. 23, during the 18th annual Community Roots Day. Volunteers are needed from 9 a.m. to noon. The first 250 volunteers will receive free t-shirts and hats and all volunteers get a free lunch. Volunteers will meet at 9 a.m. at the William C. Sims Sr. Neighborhood Recreation Center, 1201 Alder St. To sign up or for more information, go to www.kwsb.cityofws.org or call City Link at 336-727-8000.

School system receives federal dollars

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools will receive \$19.6 million over the next five years as a grant from the federal Teacher Incentive Fund, U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced recently.

The school system will use the money to support its locally developed STAR3 program. The program, which stands for School Transformation by Actively Recruiting, Retaining and Rewarding, will provide a combination of incentive pay, coaching, instructional support and professional development for up to 16

schools.

"Our students will be the beneficiary of this wonderful opportunity," Superintendent Don Martin said. "There are so many factors that affect student achievement, and now we can test whether incentive pay, coupled with additional professional support for teachers, will increase student performance as compared to an across the board pay increase with additional professional support. We have worked with national evaluators Mathematica Policy Research on another project and have great respect for the expertise that they bring to this project."



Dr. Martin

The Teacher Incentive Fund began in 2006 as a way to support projects that develop and implement performance-based compensation systems for teachers, principals and other personnel to increase educator effectiveness and student achievement.

The STAR3 program includes incentives such as \$10,000 signing bonuses to attract outstanding teachers in the hard-to-fill subject areas of math, science, English as a second language, and exceptional children. The school system is specifically recruiting teachers who have met specific criteria related to improvement in student test scores.

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