

Industries for the Blind gets new buses for its youth programs

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind (IFB) dedicated two new buses that will let more students who are blind and visually impaired use its services on Thursday, Feb 25.

The new buses will transport students to Tracy's Little Red Schoolhouse. The schoolhouse is part of IFB's A Brighter Path Foundation and houses Student Enrichment Experience (SEE) after school and summer programs for youth who are blind or visually impaired.



Vavra

Each bus seats up to 14 students and will let the program provide transportation for its young participants. The funding for the buses was provided by Miracles in Sight, the second largest eye bank in the country. Miracles in Sight Executive Director Dean Vavra said that it will let more students take advantage of the SEE programs.

"There's plenty of seats available in this schoolhouse, just not enough buses to get the kids there," said Vavra. "That is changing today."

Among the speakers at last week's event was Shareff Stewart, a junior at Reynolds High School who is blind. He was among eight students who took part in the program when it began in 2007. He said it was a week filled with activities like arts and crafts, life skills and learning about each other. The program has grown and the red schoolhouse was built to house it in 2012.

Stewart is now a technology assistant at the Little Red School house, teaching computer skills to others, like how to browse the Internet. He said the buses will help his students get to his class.

"I really love supporting these kids because of the support IFB gave me," he said.

Stewart thanked the teachers at SEE for helping students "see the world in their own way." He said he's learned many things from the program like doing laundry and cooking.

"I enjoy being blind, every day is an adventure," said Stewart, who plans to go to college and eventually become a teacher for the visually impaired.

Students in the blind or visually impaired program at Sherwood Forest Elementary attended the event, enjoying some time in the Little Red Schoolhouse before taking one of the new buses back to Sherwood. Among the students who are also regulars in the SEE program, was Elisha Simmons. The fourth grader, who is blind, played the piano in a classroom at the school-

house after the bus dedication. He said he was glad that the buses will help kids like him get to SEE. He said the program was fun and he'd recommend it to any children who are blind or visually impaired.

"I like seeing the people here and going to places and going to cooking and playing on the playground," said Elisha.

Jenny Viars, the youth program manager for A Brighter Path, said that the buses will solve transportation problems that have prevented some students from coming to SEE programs.

"We're able to provide minimal transportation for a very small group of kids; having these buses is going to allow us to expand," she said.

SEE has an after school program three days a week and a three week summer camp that includes learning things like cooking, yoga, music, computers, braille and independent living skills. There are also field trips, which the buses will be used for, like planned outings to the Winston-Salem Symphony and the Twin City Stage for a Wizard of Oz performance, where students will use wireless headphones to listen to live descriptions of what's happening on the stage. All SEE programs are free and are funded by donations and grants. For more information about SEE, or to register a child in the program, contact Viars at 336-245-5669 or email jviars@wsifb.com.



Stewart



Photos by Todd Luck

The new buses, parked outside of Tracy's Little Red Schoolhouse, are a new way to transport students who are blind or visually impaired to the programs there.



Elisha Simmons plays the piano with Zaire Jegede at Tracy's Little Red Schoolhouse.



Submitted

The former site of Vulcan Materials near Reynolds Park Rd. will be the home of Quarry Park, which is expected to include several picnic areas and an amphitheater.

City officials break ground for new park

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

The former Vulcan quarry just off Reynolds Park Rd. took a giant step toward the future last Friday when a groundbreaking ceremony was held for phase one of the new Quarry Park.

According to city leaders, the finished product will include an amphitheater, a disc golf course, and several picnic shelters. The park will also include additions to the greenway connector system that will provide citizens in the Waughtown area access to the William R. Anderson Jr. Recreation Center located at 2450 Reynolds Park Rd.

Phase one of the project will cost the city \$5 million, which is part of \$30.85 million parks and recreation bond that was approved by voters in 2014. The first phase is expected to include the construction of parking areas and bathrooms.

Vulcam Materials, a company that used to obtain rock for construction at the site, ceased operation in the early 1980 and the city took over the 228-acre site in 1997.

Since the early 1990s the quarry has been filling with water. Although not many citizens have seen the site, those who have

believe the crystal blue water surrounded by steep jagged cliffs and rocks would make the perfect location for a park.

Winston-Salem resident Allison Joyner said as a child she and a few friends would make trips through the woods just to get a glimpse at the natural wonder.

"It's really hard to believe something like that is right here in Winston-Salem," she said. "I can't wait to see it when everything is done."

City council member James Taylor said it is time to unveil the picturesque scene, not only to those in the community, but to the world.

"This is one of the best kept secrets in our community," Taylor said. "As a native of Winston-Salem, it means a lot to me to be able to unlock this hidden treasure for the citizens."

The first phase of construction is expected to be completed by early 2017. Phase two will include recreation areas and an amphitheater, but the city does not yet have funds in place for those projects.

Director of Parks and Recreation Tim Grant said the site of the future park is a jewel that city officials plan to turn into a diamond.

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