

Young dancers take top spot on podium

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

Dance is one of the purist forms of expression we have today. The Elite All-Starz have been expressing themselves along with dominating the competition in recent events. The girls have competed in seven competitions and have come away with first place on six of those occasions.

Founder and owner of the dance troop Jemia Blakely, a Parkland High graduate, stated that the troop currently has six girls ranging from ages seven to 15. Boys are also welcome to join the group as well. She has been owner/operator of the troop for 16 years. Blakely was a cheerleader and former dancer as a youth and young adult.

"I get the most satisfaction out of being able to pass along the knowledge I have to the kids," said Blakely. "I want the community to see young people doing something positive and stay off the streets and stop being grown. I want

my daughter to have the opportunity to gain a scholarship and maybe go to Juilliard."

The girls were coming off of a victory in Las Vegas, Nev., at a Star Power event. They placed first in the Hip Hop open category for their age group. Blakely said she was very proud of their accomplishment, but they had no time to rest as they quickly had to prepare for another event in New Jersey on July 25.

During the competition in New Jersey the girls competed in The Power division, which is the toughest and most advanced division. The girls took home first place in the Power-Hip Hop and Power-Open categories in

the duo/trio division. For their efforts they also took home a high score plaque.

Only three of the troop members were able to make it to the competition in Las Vegas and New Jersey. Leanishea Davis, Azya Craig-Blakely, and Nariah Nieves stated they love to dance and were confident of their chances to win.

"We love going to competition and we have the best coach," the girls said. "First we get scared, but once we start dancing it turns into excitement. We were very happy that we won in Las Vegas and we have done so many competitions we expected to win in New Jersey."

According to Blakely, the girls fundraise to be able to take the trips to competitions. She stated that she understands that funds may be tight for some families. She said by raising the funds instead of asking the parents of the children for the money, the financial burden on them is minimal. Blakely said



From left to right, Nariah Nieves, Azya Craig-Blakely, and Leanishea Davis show off the trophies won at the Star Power Dance competition in Las Vegas.

Photo by Timothy Ramsey

because of their efforts fundraising, the parents have not had to come out of pocket for any travel or hotel fees during this season.

The girls work out at the Winston Lake YMCA. They are trained in differ-

ent forms of dance such as hip hop, jazz, tap and lyrical. The young ladies stated they love learning new routines and the positive feedback they get from their coaches.

Blakely stated she would like to expand and

have a bigger studio. One day she would like to have a foundation where she can offer young ladies scholarships and have a storefront studio of her own.



Coach Rodney McKoy (standing and dressed in black) addresses participants and families.

Submitted photo

Local coach gives back to Triad youth

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

A group of Triad youth participated in the redeveloped Twin City Football Camp. The youth camp originated back in the 1990s, but was discontinued after a few years. Coach Rodney McKoy, a Winston Salem native, Carver High School and WSSU football standout, reenergized the youth camp with over 200 daily participants. The three-day football camp was offered free of charge to Triad youth, with ages ranging from five to fifteen. The

spirited event was held at Winston Salem's Ray Agnew Field from July 11 - 15.

McKoy's motivation in reintroducing the Twin City Football Camp to the community is his need to "give back to this area" that has done so much for him. Coach McKoy also sees a need in our community for more youth to be exposed early to the basic fundamentals of football. Many of these activities are offered in the community at a cost; however, the expense and location for a number of participants can be a tremendous barrier.

In addition to football techniques, the camp offered character development. Speakers from the community that assisted in this event included Antonio "Tiny" Stevenson, Reginald "Reggie" Dandy, Robert Hill, Foster Wilkins, and Steve Wilkes. At the completion of the camp, Coach McKoy closed the session emphasizing life skills, and each participant was awarded a medal, tee shirt and healthy nutritious snacks.

This football camp was supported by Reggie Green of Dummit Fradin

Attorneys at Law, John Troy Witherspoon, Premier Design Builders, Foster Wilkins, ProtectYourSkull.com, and Nard Green, Director of Winston Salem Tiny Indians Organization. In addition, a special note of thanks was given to the coaches and individuals who provided monetary support and time in contributing to the success of this tremendous event. Based on this year's success, and with continued community support, Coach McKoy plans to offer this football camp on annually.

Recreation center offers kids more than sports

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During the summer many recreation centers hold camps for the neighborhood children. For many of the campers, most if not all of their time is spent playing sports. The W.R. Anderson Center wanted to break from the norm by hosting a Poetry Slam Thursday, July 28, for their campers.

The Poetry Slam was the idea of Anderson Center employee Betty Wallace. She stated the idea came to her back in the spring as they were reading a story named "Poetry Slam." The book was about competition and the power of words, so the idea just blossomed from there.

"I think the poetry slam was outstanding. I think all of the skills we have been working on this whole time were demonstrated and I am very proud of all of them," Wallace said.

Bryant McCorkle, director of W.R. Anderson, said, "It was a great event and with this being Mrs. Wallace's baby, we just worked together to make a great event. Next year we are going to bring it back

and now that we have some experience, we can work out the kinks. I also want to get some more sponsors so we are able to do more for the kids."

According to Wallace, Carver High alum and current San Diego Charger Chris Hairston donated the funds for the poetry slam to take place. Hairston as a child would come and play at the Anderson center as well as participate in the camps. With the amount donated from Hairston, first, second and third place winners in each division were able to receive a cash prize.

"The Anderson Center provided me a haven for fun during the summertime when I was a kid," said Hairston. "Having a safe, productive and positive environment in your own community for the children is paramount to their growth and development. I'm glad I could do the little I could to be a part of that."

The kids were separated into three divisions based on age - 6-7 years old, 8-9 years old, and 10-12 years old. The event started with the camp cheerleaders performing for the parents and loved

ones in attendance. They were followed by the camp ballet dancers and drummers.

There were a broad range of topics that the children explored during the poetry slam. Shoes, music, dance, food and even the Black Lives Matter movement were all subjects of some of the children's poems. The children diligently prepared for the competition and were excited with the results.

The judges had tough decisions to make in determining a winner in every division. There were five categories to score each contestant in and a first, second and third place winner was named for each division.

Trenton Dozier, second place winner from division three, stated he came up with the topic of his poem because he was frustrated with the food selections at his school. Justin Wallace, the division two winner, was inspired to write his poem because he likes Emmitt Smith and noticed his big shoes. Jordyn Curtis, first place division three, said she is a spiritual dancer at United Metropolitan Missionary

Baptist Church and she loves to dance. Her response when asked about winning first place was emphatically saying "I'm very happy!"

The parents were pleased with the performances of their children. Mary Dean, grandmother of division three third place winner Bryce Baker,

stated "It's great because he is always involved in activities, so we are very proud of him."



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