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Rhythm and Rhyme Youth Poetry Slam showcases young poets' talent

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

The participants in the summer camp at W.R. Anderson participated in the Rhythm and Rhyme Youth Poetry Slam for the fourth year. The poetry slam took place on Thursday, July 18, at the center, with over 60 kids across three age groups participating in the event.

The theme for this year's event was Love, Peace and Soul, based on the television show Soul Train. To pay homage to the show, the campers performed rehearsed dance routines prior to the show.

The young poets put in a lot of work preparing for the poetry slam, said Betty Wallace, event coordinator. Wallace praised the young people for their tremendous effort this year.

"What we did differently this year is we started a little bit earlier, we started in April, because some of the kids attend the center during the school year and they were more advanced for the summer," said Wallace. "We also had the parents a little more involved this year, by giving them an outline of things they had to follow in order to get the kids prepared."

"We also gave them a link for things about



Photos by Timothy Ramsey

There were over 60 children who participated in the poetry slam at W.R. Anderson this year.

the Soul Train era to look at. We then gave them helpful words to use in their poems to help describe what they were talking about."

To help give the kids an understanding of the theme, Wallace showed them clips of the Soul Train show and discussed how the world has evolved since the 1970s.

"We made a comparison between what was happening then to what is going on now in this par-

ticular generation," she continued. "We found out a lot of the songs dealt with love, war and peace and those kinds of things."

"We are still dealing with a lot of issues we were dealing with during that era and the kids are more aware of it, so they had an opportunity to share their ideas. It all started from a couple of clips on YouTube and then they integrated their ideas within their writing."

The winners from the

three age groups were: Harmony Bowman (group 1), Addison Barnes (group 2) and Chloe Moore (group 3). Moore has been a winner in previous years of the poetry slam. Wallace had high praise for the intense research and preparation Moore put into this year's poem.

"Chloe has experience under her belt and she would often come to me for private coaching," Wallace said. "Every day we would kind of work on

her piece. She spent a lot of time wanting a lot more coaching by coming to me and asking me how she could enhance her writing."

According to Wallace, the young poets had a lot of competition between themselves leading up to the poetry slam. She said they would practice with one another to help sharpen their skills.

Wallace said it was a group effort putting together the poetry slam. She

was very pleased with the performance and turnout at the center. "Everyone did their part as far as making sure that we were on point and that the people got the vision of what we were trying to talk about," said Wallace.

Moving forward, Wallace would love to expand the poetry slam to include other centers. She feels if they can include more kids, it will expand their summer experience beyond the norm.

Leo Rucker's 'Painting Happy Hill' opens at SECCA

BY JUDIE HOLCOMB-PACK
THE CHRONICLE

Judging the success of an art opening is more than just the number of people who attend; it is also how enthusiastically they interact with the artist. Leo Rucker's opening reception on Thursday, July 18, had both.

Attendees filled the gallery where his show, "Painting Happy Hill," is displayed and friends surrounded Rucker like at a family reunion.

Indeed, for some it was a family reunion. James McDuffie, the subject of one of Rucker's por-

traits, had numerous family members taking selfies with him and the portrait of him and his brother as children walking on Liberia Street. McDuffie said that in the photo from which Rucker painted the portrait, his brother was trying to get him to smile, but "I was being grumpy. We had been to church ... you can tell because we were wearing our polished shoes."

Rucker said he found about 300 photos that Mel White had collected when he worked at Old Salem. (Mel White was formerly the circulation manager at The Chronicle in the late 1980s). Rucker credits White for starting the Across the Creek project by collecting photos of Happy Hill and said the project evolved when he started reviewing the photos. "It was just waiting on the right opportunity," Rucker explained.

To see the photos that Rucker painted from, to see not only the detail, but



Photos by Judie Holcomb-Pack

James McDuffie (on left) with Leo Rucker in front of the painting by Rucker from a photo of James and Melvin McDuffie as children on Liberia Street in Happy Hill.

the emotion that he puts into each piece, is awe-inspiring. Portraits include Virgil Foy and Harriet Foy, called "We Happy;" Alice Simmons Pitts, "Ms. Alice;" Priscilla Walls McGee, "In Front of Ms. Motie's House;" Frank and

Melvin McDuffie, "Shake On It;" John Forney, "The Stoneman;" and Spencer "Popeye" Anderson and Wilbert Burl, "Dan's Place," are just a few of the portraits that capture the heart and soul of this vibrant community.

Rucker credits the Arts Council of Winston-Salem and their support of public art for getting him started in his successful career as an artist. His love for art began at an early age and after receiving awards in high school, he attended

Rutledge College, receiving a degree in commercial art. A competition at the Sawtooth Center for Visual Arts led to the first of many portraiture and mural commissions. He completed a series of drawings and paintings for the Forsyth County Partnership (Smart Start) and has done work for Segmented Marketing Services, including an ongoing column, Role Models, for Sophisticate's Black Hair magazine that has featured more than 200 ethnic women from around the world.

Rucker has taught at the Sawtooth Center and presently works as the lead historic interpreter at Old Salem Museum and Gardens at the St. Philip's African Moravian Heritage site. His show will be on display at SECCA through August 11. To learn more about Leo Rucker, visit www.ruckerartstudio.webs.com.

Also on display at SECCA is the exhibit, See Happy Hill on A2

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