



CHANELL SMITH AND RAYMOND THOMPSON color the "pig's house" for a production of "The Three Little Pigs."

Jump Start:

Where Students And Tutors Learn

BY SUSAN USHER

A summer program aimed at giving youngsters a "Jump Start" on school this fall is benefitting a second group of students as well—the 20 college-bound young adults hired as their tutors.

Devised by Anne Mitchell, the school systems' Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA) coordinator, the free tutoring program is offered at four schools: Shallotte, Leland and South Brunswick Middle and Bolivia Elementary. Up to 25 students per site meet for group classes and one-on-one help Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Its aim, she said, is to help students retain what they learned last year and to work on their academic weaknesses before returning to school this fall.

In JTPA's traditional summer jobs program, the federally funded program simply places students from low in-

come households in summer jobs.

This pilot program is different, because it provides not just a job, but a learning experience as well. Five tutors at each site earn \$4.50 an hour and are supervised by a site manager who is a teacher, like Gwen Gore at Shallotte Middle.

She said tutors develop lesson plans for each day which she reviews. During the day she checks classes periodically to see that all is well. When a tutor has problems with a student, the student is referred to Gore, she said, "and I straighten them out."

Staff arrives an hour before the students to plan lessons, and stay until 4 p.m. to grade papers and share ideas on how to meet students' needs. Gore said she is seeing steady improvement in the tutors' skills in working with students.

On a recent day at Shallotte Middle, tutor Darilyn



NICKY BROOKS helps a group of second through fourth graders learn about abbreviations.

STAFF PHOTOS BY SUSAN USHER

Morgan was coaching students through short productions of two fairy tales, "Little Red Riding Hood" and "The Three Pigs".

Morgan, who is studying at Brunswick Community College to become a teacher and a cosmetologist, said she drew on her drama class experiences at West Brunswick High School. The exercises may be fun, but they also develops communication and cooperative skills.

She also tutors her fifth and sixth grade students individually in math and spelling, said Gwen Gore, the teacher who serves as supervisor of the Shallotte site.

In the adjacent classroom, several different activities are under way.

Nicky Brooks is leading the youngest group of students in a chalkboard drill, working with abbreviations and word jumbles.

When one student complains that another is answer-

ing all the questions, Brooks replies, "That's because she studied and did her homework."

At the back of the room, another tutor, Dominica Hewett, is observing and taking notes. A rising sophomore at West Brunswick High School, she said she's just catching on to how to manage a classroom of students.

"Now I can understand why teachers are like they are," she said, shaking her head.

Gore said the younger students Brooks and Hewett are helping "have trouble with everything," telling time, naming the days of the week, spelling and reading.

On the far side of the room Tamika Cotton works with older students, "covering everything from geography to science—whatever they need."

This particular afternoon she is drilling two students in map skills, having them fill in an outline map of the United States as she calls out the names of the states.

BIRDS LEARNED TO HUNT AT RAPTOR CENTER

Northern Harriers Released In Local Marsh

BY SUSAN USHER

Local birdwatchers may be surprised to see an unfamiliar bird that looks like a mix between a hawk and an owl cruising low, back and forth across the marshes near Sunset Beach over the next few weeks or months.

Three birds of prey known as northern harriers or marsh hawks were released into the marsh Sunday afternoon after spending approximately six weeks in the care of the Carolina Raptor Center near Charlotte. Barbara Schmidt, a center volunteer since 1988, and her husband Walter, part-time residents of Sunset Beach, drove from their home at Huntersville Sunday to release the two males and one female.

Standing in the marsh grasses overlooking the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, Barbara Schmidt took large, rectangular boxes from her husband one by one, removed the sealing tape, opened the lid and stepped back.

Each time, a nearly-grown bird emerged, blinked yellow-brown eyes, and hesitated for only a second before soaring up and away toward a protective grove of trees overlooking the marsh. A small but appreciative audience of friends and neighbors of the Schmidts and news personnel looked on as the birds regained their freedom.

The three were fledglings when they arrived at the center June 19. They had been found that day in Trigg County, Ky., on the ground by someone who thought the still-downy birds were orphans.

"They thought they were doing a good thing, 'rescuing' the birds, but really they did more harm than good," said Laura Keistler, development director for the center. "They didn't realize the birds nest on the ground."

"Our environment is in trouble when a raptor is in trouble."

—Barbara Schmidt

The fledgling marsh hawks were taken first to a veterinarian, then brought by a falconer to the center. There they were cared for on a diet of mice and birds supplemented by vitamins and calcium. Two weeks before their release the harriers were moved into a 40-foot "flight cage," which allowed the nearly full-size birds to exercise their wings and practice catching their own food—live mice released into the cage.

The only species of harrier in the United States, the northern harrier or marsh hawk is a slender bird with long, narrow wings, a long tail and a distinctive white patch of feathers on the rump, at the top of the tail. Males typically are smaller and mostly gray. The adult female is larger and mostly brown. Her tail bands of dark and light brown are usually equal size.

It is the only bird other than an owl to have a facial disc—a circular area of stiff feathers around the eyes—and it looks like a mixture of hawk and owl. The three birds released Sunday were almost full-grown, said Keistler, noting that the harriers can reach a length of up to 2 feet, with a wingspan in excess of 4 feet and can weigh up to 21 pounds.

The bird hunts in a distinct pattern, flying back and forth, low over fields, in search of prey—ro-

dent, insects, amphibians and other small birds. Raccoon is its major predator.

Breeding in Canada and the northern United States, the Northern Harrier winters over in the Midwest and eastern United States.

"Extreme northeastern North Carolina is the only place they are found naturally," said Keistler. "They overwinter here, but we have no recorded population of harriers."

Come breeding time, the center staff hopes the three birds released Sunday afternoon will join the raptor migration north. Two of the three birds were banded with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bands for future tracking.

Staging the release at Sunset Beach was a natural fit, according to Keistler, since the Schmidts' home overlooks a marsh, the harriers' natural habitat.

Schmidt works mainly in the center office as assistant to the executive director. The non-profit center, at Latta Plantation Park near Charlotte, is dedicated to the preservation of raptors (birds of prey such as eagles and hawks) through public education, rehabilitation and research.

"They're a wonderful group of people and the work they do with the birds is really great," said Schmidt, a longtime birdwatcher who has developed a special appreciation for raptors. "There are a lot of misconceptions about hawks and other raptors, many people think they are 'bad' birds, but they're part of the ecology."

Raptors are also good environmental indicators, she said. "If there's something wrong, it shows up very quickly, as with the DDT and the ospreys. Our environment is in trouble when a raptor is in trouble."



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

A NEARLY GROWN NORTHERN HARRIER regains freedom in the wild when released in the marshes near Sunset Beach Sunday by Barbara Schmidt, a volunteer with the Carolina Raptor Center near Charlotte.

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