

GOAL IS TO MAKE SCHOOLS SAFER

State Grant Will Fund Projects To Teach Students Communication, Problem-Solving

BY SUSAN USHER

All 12 Brunswick County schools are expected to eventually benefit from a \$100,000 grant from the State Board of Education for five school safety-related projects involving about half the schools in the district.

Brunswick was one of 35 school systems to receive grants from the state for programs aimed at reducing violence in the schools.

"This will give us the opportunity to try some interventions, different approaches, and see what works so we can focus on those things," said Jan Calhoun, assistant superintendent for instruction.

Five local projects ("none of them Band-Aids") together are dubbed the Safe Alternatives Program, said Calhoun, and are aimed at preventing violence through a variety of means that should be continue once the funding is gone.

Most emphasize ways to teach students how to resolve conflicts verbally rather than by resorting to violence; expanding a peer mediation program into all middle schools and high schools; holding workshops on coping and conflict resolution for parents in grades kindergarten through 12; starting a bus safety program; and taking steps to promote understanding of cultural differences, focusing on students in grades five, seven and nine.

While not traditional academic subjects, the efforts are expected to

help students learn practical skills they can use throughout their lives in establishing relationships, getting along with people and taking responsibility for their behavior.

The grant, which will be received in late January, includes funds for materials and supplies, equipment and support staff. It reflects work by a coalition of the four western district schools, Union Elementary, Waccamaw Elementary, Shallotte Middle and West Brunswick High, and a separate effort by North Brunswick High School, edited into a single application by central office staff member Pam Kelly of the Wellness /Drug Abuse Prevention program.

"It was a real team effort," said Kelly. "We worked together."

The proposal also received widespread endorsement and support from community organizations and agencies that will be involved in aspects of the project. Training in some areas, such as conflict resolution, will be introduced through existing programs such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE,) operated with the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, and the Advisor/ Advisee (AA) program in the middle schools.

Included is money for a camera and camera boxes for school bus monitoring of passenger behavior that will be shared by the participating schools.

"Bus safety was a big issue," said Kelly. "The areas with the highest levels of bus violence will be the ones to get the most cameras."

North Brunswick High School will also explore a community service alternative to out-of-school suspension, a last resort for most schools in dealing with a student disciplinary problem.

"This way the students will be productive and learn some skills and not be wasting time at home when they need to be moving forward academically," said Calhoun.

Principal Bob Harris is interested in working with community agencies to place students in a service assignment rather than simply sending them home on out-of-school suspension.

"They would be given meaningful jobs, something that will help improve their self-esteem and help them learn to work with other people," said Calhoun.

"We're hoping all these objectives will help with our safe schools program," he said. "We want alternatives for these kids. We want them to learn to get along. A lot of kids

have problems coping with their anger."

Much of the spring will be devoted to ordering supplies and beginning training. Some of the actual programs won't begin until next fall, with the start of the 1994-95 school year, and then will spread into other schools as those who receive early training train others.

The school system had also applied for another \$100,000 grant from the Governor's Crime Commission, which it didn't receive because its "juvenile justice indicators" such as suspension rates and delinquency petitions didn't indicate as serious a problem as some other applicants. Calhoun said the system would reapply in February.

Meanwhile the N.C. Center for Prevention of School Violence has offered to form a consortium of schools and help them look for other sources of funding for safety-related projects.

"That's great help," said Calhoun. Reducing violence helps create an atmosphere conducive to learning, he said. "We need to have safe schools and happy schools."



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Keep It Safe, Sober

West Brunswick High School students Jessica Robertson (left) and Erica Cumbie promote a safe holiday as members of Students Against Drunk Driving during Saturday's Christmas parade.

Education Foundation Still Working To Establish Base

A private, not-for-profit foundation with the aim of helping improve public education in Brunswick County is continuing its reorganizing efforts.

Meeting Monday at Supply Elementary School, the Brunswick County Educational Foundation Board of Directors established standing committees, named additional directors and set a regular meeting schedule.

Executive Director Bob Slockett of Yaupon Beach, a former member of the Brunswick County Board of Education, said four new directors have joined the board: Wayne Tharp of Leland, representing the North Brunswick Chamber of Commerce; Russell Baldwin, former mayor of Leland; and two appointees of the Brunswick County Principals/Assistant Principals Association, Sandra Robinson, principal of Shallotte Middle School, and Doyle Brinson, assistant principal of Southport Elementary School.

Directors helped identify tasks for standing committees on organization and development, program and projects, and funding, and volunteered for committee work.

The board of directors plans to begin meeting the first Monday of each month at Supply Elementary School, with the public invited. Directors were asked to bring prospective foundation volunteers with them to the next board meeting on Jan. 3.

At that meeting they will discuss ideas for an initial project to bring the Foundation early visibility and credibility and a means of funding

such a project.

More information is available from Slockett or from Joe Brust, assistant executive director, of Ocean Isle Beach.

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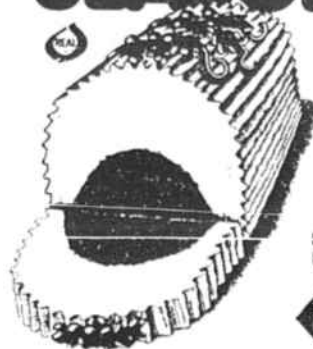
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