

YouTube video of local student program becomes part of national controversy

By Heather McGaha

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A video recently posted on YouTube showing Asheville elementary school students chanting praise of President Obama sparked controversy after a similar video aired on national TV.

"This was a prompt written years ago which had one little segment about Obama that people took out of context," said Jan Blunt, communications director for the Buncombe County school system. "We are supportive of the entire program that was produced, and do not believe the intent of the program was not to be political, but to celebrate famous Americans that have done something unusual or outstanding."

The video was a comprehensive 30-minute presentation, which Sand Hill-Venable Elementary School's third grade classes performed, emphasizing one person's ability to make a difference.

The school gave the video to parents and Parent Teacher Organization members.

"The 44th president of the United States of America. Change has come. Change has come. Uniting blacks and whites. Hope. Being both, Obama cannot take sides,"

students chanted in the video.

Blunt said the presentation also included the acknowledgement of outstanding Americans like Amelia Earhart and Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Kids are very influenced by their teachers and the kids need to learn about the government, but not be pushed to be supportive of any certain political party and their views," UNC Asheville transfer student Laura Tinney said.

Blunt said the BCS gave the public the opportunity to view the video online, but no one took them up on this offer. The user who uploaded the video onto YouTube was not a parent of a Sand Hill student.

"As I understand, after the gentleman saw the school in New Jersey that had a video of children chanting about Obama make national news, this prompted the man to upload the video to show something similar was happening here," Blunt said.

Sand Hill Principal Diane McEntire and Assistant Principal Scott Lister declined to comment.

"This was not at all a part of a political agenda. The students did their presentation in a creative way and didn't want it to be counterproductive," Blunt said.

Homeless

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coming. I think a lot of people's problems are solved here, but it's the influx (of homeless people). There's a lot of people here this week that aren't from Asheville and weren't here last week," he said.

While the cause of homelessness is not limited to just one reason, Ferrell said society has lost its respect for others.

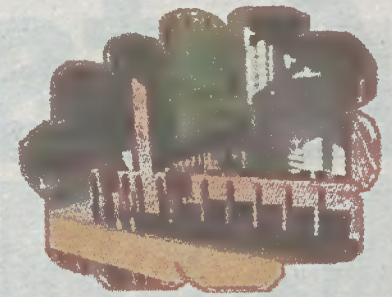
"People think that homeless people are garbage," Ferrell said.

Putnam said he doesn't want to be falsely identified.

"Everybody should realize that people have different situations. You can't judge one from another one's viewpoint," Putnam said.

Sophomore classics student Eleanor DeTreville said she agreed.

"Everyone has a different situation. Something like that could happen to anyone at any time. It really depends on our background and different circumstances," she said.



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Craft

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"I want to show students images from the beginning, 36 years ago, and let them see the evolution of what I have been through design and technique wise," he said.

Powell said he now does commissions for homes and businesses that want personalized stained glass. Some of his pieces cost more than \$900 and others he charges by the square foot.

"In 1988 I got my first big commission, and just two years ago I finished my fourth," he said. "When I'm between stained glass petitions, I do glass sculptures."

Committed artists pursue art wholeheartedly and allow the jobs and finances to fall into place, Powell said.

"When I went to college, all I knew was that I loved art. I started by taking an elective art class and it sort of took over my itinerary," he said. "If you're putting your

heart into it, even if you're doing a different job, if you keep doing art you'll find a way to make a living doing it."

Students allowing themselves leeway in their degree by broadening their talent find it easier to obtain work after school, Krulik said.

"I was originally going to focus on photography, but I really love oil painting so I did that instead," she said. "I already have work lined up for me." However, she added, "Most people who go into the arts program plan to go on to grad school and then to teach."

The economic downturn only marginally affects the craft campus, Skidmore said.

"If you had a million dollars set aside for just this series, would you be flowering as much as you would be in flowering times? You'd probably still be holding back somewhat," he said.

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