

New computer programs

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school personnel should become involved in helping the students outside of the classrooms and schools.

All of the kids who work on the computers at the center are African-American, but Brown says "if a white kid lived in this neighborhood, he'd be free to come in here too, but my target is for African-American kids." She adds that any child who lives in the area is free to use the center when it's open.

Brown isn't the only school employee working at the center.

Gwendolyn Jones, a teacher and computer specialist at Easton Elementary School works as a tutor for the students, and says she is very excited about her involvement in helping the kids. "One of the first things we did was ask 'in what way may we service you?' Most of the students want to do papers.

It's that time of year where they have papers that they must have done by a certain time," she said. Jones added that teaching the kids to write term papers on the computer wasn't

the primary focus, rather than teaching them also to produce good work.

"We concentrated on trying to get a quality product. We work in a draft form first, and after we get our draft form, we let them look it over and they saw how easy it was to print it out, and get that draft form, then go back and make a finished product. And we're very excited about the word processing aspect."

Both Jones and Brown say they enjoy working with the students not only on a professional level, but also

personally. Brown comments that "... the young man Shawn, when he first came in, had no sense about keyboarding. And when young kids go out and look for jobs at McDonald's and places like that, they've got to know keyboarding. He didn't know keyboarding. Now he can do it. And the machine showed him how many keys he had learned. So I get a joy out of helping kids, and seeing them grow."

The kids also seem to enjoy working at the center and they say

at Hanes Middle School also says their grades have improved because of it.

Melinda Pace, a 10th grader at RJ Reynolds High School says "I've improved my grades a lot. I used to make C's, now I'm making A's and B's." She also says her teachers have noticed her improvement, and say the center is indeed making a difference.

Shawn Stagers, also a 10th grader at RJ Reynolds, says his teachers have also noticed the change. He says "They have sent home notes and gave me good compliments about my grades."

Chiffon Pace, an eighth grader

coming to the center has helped her improve her school performance. She says she is now making B's in her social studies class, where before she was making C's.

The majority of other students who go to the center are also experiencing better grades, and Brown says although she has not yet contacted the school guidance counselors to see just how well the students are doing, she says the kids are coming in excited about their grades. She adds that there are days when the students have to be pried away from the computers at closing time.

Project '91

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tickets are sold in the schools to seniors, and seniors can buy a ticket for themselves and a ticket for a guest," said Stromski. She added that "it's in the schools because they know best when they sell them to their classmates, who's a senior...and if we sold them at the gate, we would have no idea who it was, so we just don't do that." Stromski also says that even though only seniors are allowed, their guest does not have to be a senior as well.

During Project Graduation '91, various types of activities will be provided for the graduates including musical entertainment from local radio DJs and live bands, including national recording artists The Rude Boys, Riff and Nikki D, and local bands such as Act of Artists Production, Phase Band and others; movies, arcade games, street dances, exhibitions, contests, and amusement rides. One lucky senior will also drive away in a new 1991 Geo Storm if he or she wins in a drawing that will be held at 3 a.m.

To ensure that the event is drug and alcohol free, Stromski says about 50 Winston-Salem police officers will be on hand for security, as well as searching all entrants of weapons with metal detectors at the gate. Because this is such a large event, Stromski says a lot of work went into planning the occasion with the help of volunteers and local organizations.

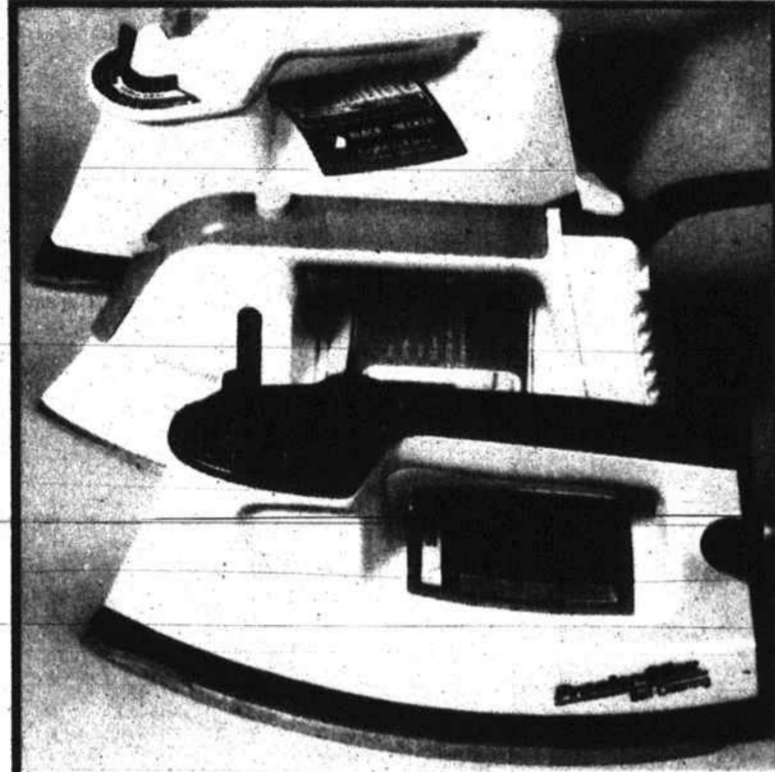
"There are about a hundred people in the community that get together and do all the work in bringing in all the activities in the program, and the arts, the foods, the prizes and all the logistical set-up. And then, we probably have at least 60 businesses that donate and give something in-kind services. It cost about \$55,000 in money, and then we have about another \$40 to \$50,000 that's contributed in kind services. Thousands of dollars in foods are donated," said Stromski.

SAFE Initiative began Project Graduation last year with some community leaders, who then coordinated with the county commissioners and the City of Winston-Salem, to provide some drug free activities for the student, after hearing about other states that had been doing it for years. "It started about 10 years ago when 18 high school students died in two graduation years. Graduation night kills students all over the United States every year....It's statistically, the highest fatality rate night for high school kids," said Stromski. However, last year, here in Forsyth County, there were not any drug or alcohol related deaths among seniors on graduation night and Stromski says she believes Project Graduation '90 should be directly credited for that. "We had 3,000 seniors and their guests, and we had no incidents of drugs, no incidents of alcohol, no weapons at the gate. Now that's phenomenal when you get 3,000 kids together," she said.

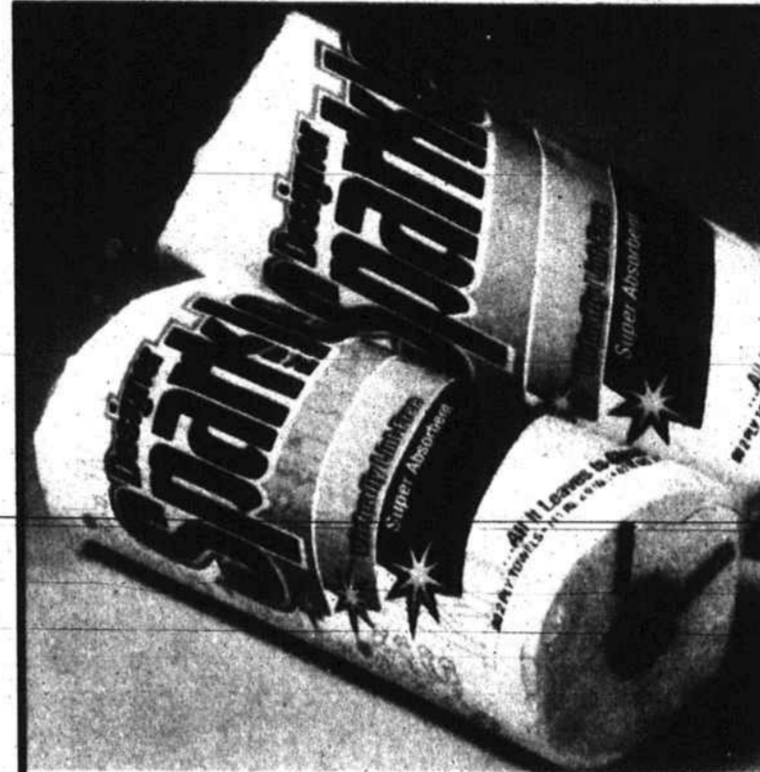
This year, Stromski says she expects closer to 4,000 seniors and their guests to attend Project Graduation '91, because 16 high schools will be participating, including North Stokes and South Stokes High Schools. She also says that "next year we hope to even branch out more into the other counties that are around us that have a low population. We want them to join in with us."

Parents and other members of the community are also showing support, Stromski says the event will have about 400 to 500 volunteers, serving food, and helping with the entertainment. Corporations are also supporting the event. The Crosby and Forsyth County are the presenting sponsors, gold sponsors include the City of Winston-Salem, RJ Reynolds, Wachovia and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School System. The program activities are being produced by the Urban Arts of the Arts Council.

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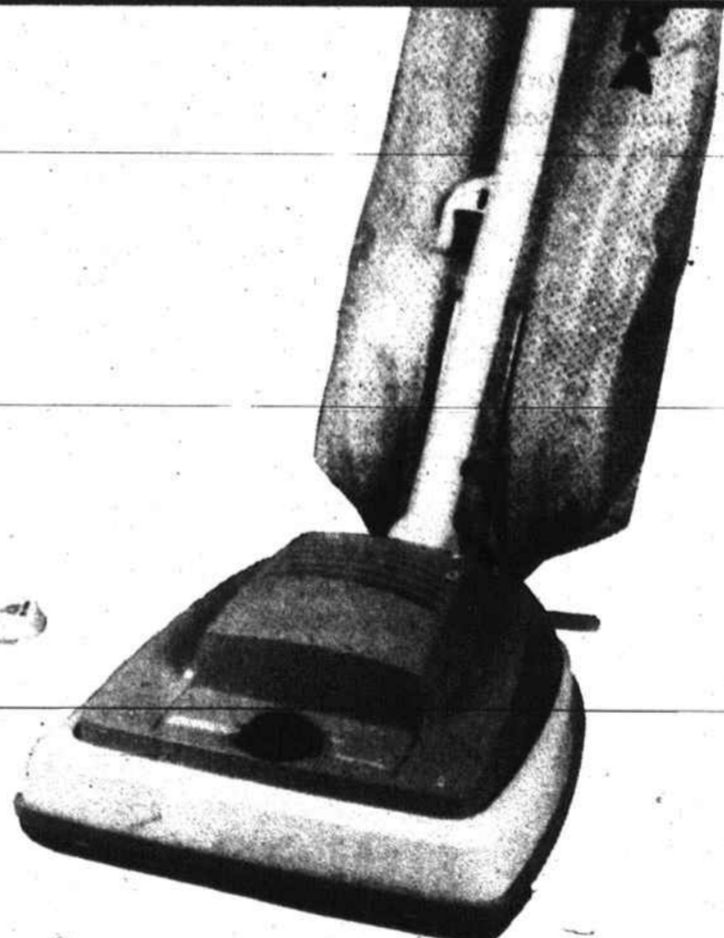


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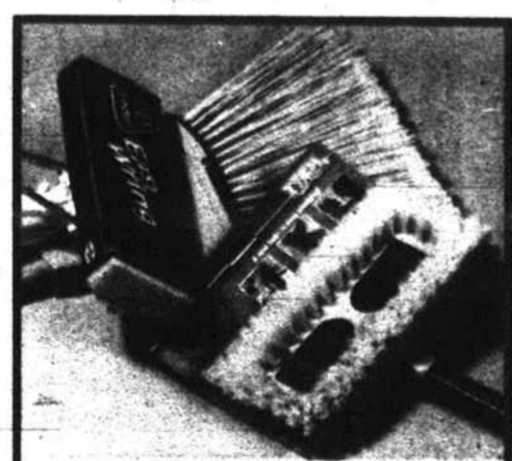


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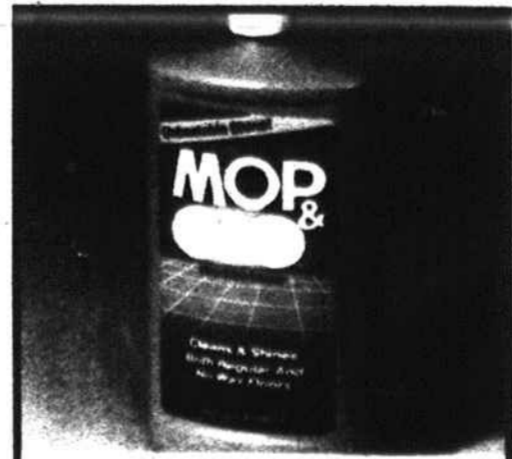
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