

Young Wesley Paige Acts Out People's Problems

By Karen Parker
Post Staff Writer
...FOCUS, a teen theatre company sponsored by Planned Parenthood, played to about 9,000 people this past season.

Among the 12 members which make up the troupe is Wesley Paige. Performing with FOCUS two years, some of his roles include parent of a young daughter who becomes pregnant, and a teen drug abuser. "These aren't problems that I've had in my life, but problems many people can relate to when they see me perform in FOCUS," Paige explained. According to the actor, a minister watching Wesley, helped him to communicate with his young, pregnant daughter.

What qualifies this 18 year old to go on stage at churches, schools, and conferences and act out people's problems and more so help them find answers to their problems? "It's his genuine interest in people," director Phil Hines stated proudly.

"When Wesley came into my office two years ago for his interview, I knew I didn't need to have him audition. "His warmth for others was apparent," Hines stated.

The director explained when he's scouting talent he isn't necessarily looking for someone who has years of singing and dancing experience. "I'm looking for someone who really cares



Wesley Paige
Former FOCUS performer

about people and who's enthusiastic," Hines assured. "The person may have never been on a stage, but that's o.k. We can teach anyone to act, but we can't teach everyone to care about others."

FOCUS performs skits about teen life from the teenager's point of view. There are no scripts. "Everything I do while on stage comes from within," Paige stated with sincerity. It doesn't matter if the group is performing at Jackson Training School or before a church group, Paige emphasized neither he nor his colleagues are on stage to resolve problems for people.

"We act out a scene and then let the audience discuss ways they'd handle the situation," Paige stated. The messages which the troupe delivers have been inspiring, many

organizations have invited the students to perform more than once.

Hines is already casting for another season. "I've cast all the girls that I need, but I still need boys," he commented. Hines isn't looking for anyone who can act exactly like Paige.

"I usually have 12 different kids with 12 different backgrounds," Hines stressed. He explained the differences in race, age, sex, and cultural background is why people in every audience can relate to FOCUS.

Being a part of FOCUS requires dedication and a willingness to render hard work. The troupe will rehearse two nights weekly beginning June 12. The performances begin in September, and participating students receive one academic hour if they remain with the troupe for the entire season. "We have a few out-of-town trips, but the students never seem to mind that," Hines laughed.

As for Paige, he won't be eligible for any more performances with FOCUS. However, he stated he will drop in on some of the performances and will always be available to assist Hines.

Paige commented he won't ever forget FOCUS. "It has opened my eyes," he said. This summer he is looking for a job preferably in a restaurant. "I know that whenever I find a job, I should always just be my-

self," Paige stated confidently. "That's what I've learned as an actor in FOCUS."

"I gotta be me," he reiterated. Paige mentioned FOCUS has also taught him to avoid making hasty decisions. "If I have a problem I never try to do anything about it, until I've thought it out," Paige insisted.

He feels wherever he's employed this summer, like FOCUS, it will be a treasured experience. "The more people I work with the better, because I like people," Paige assured. By listening, I learn from them and I also

like helping them," he noted.

If you want to be a part of the learning experience which FOCUS can provide, telephone Hines at Planned Parenthood, 377-0841, Monday through Friday.



RENEE PAYNE

Meets rigid requirements

Charlottean Renee Payne Receives National Award

By Loretta Manago
Post Staff Writer

Several years ago the White House noticed that millions of America's school-age children were unfit physically. As a result of this diagnosis, the President's Physical Fitness Award was established. This award was given to students who displayed in excellence.

While children everywhere began doing callisthenics, the academic level began to decline. Therefore, another award was formed - the President's Academic Fitness Award.

Charlottean Renee Payne was one of the 108 students at East Mecklenburg High School who received this high recognition of academic excellence in the initial program of the award.

The Presidential Academic Fitness Award was founded basically to recognize graduating seniors who have attained a high level of academic achievement and pursued a solid core of academic courses, encourage students to achieve and maintain academic fitness, encourage parents to support and supervise their children's efforts at home and sustain a national interest in the academic fitness of our nation's youth.

By becoming a recipient of this award, there were certain rigid requirements that Miss Payne had to meet. Throughout the ninth, 10th, 11th and the first semester of the 12th grade, Miss Payne had to attain a B+ average (equivalent to 3.3 on a 4. scale). In addition to this requirement Miss Payne had to

place in at or above the 80th percentile on any nationally recognized standardized achievement test battery or any nationally standardized college admissions test as well as completing by graduating at least 12 high school or high level course units in the "New Basics." The National Commission on Excellence in Education recommended the "New Basics" to include English, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign language and computer science.

Miss Payne, a 1984 graduate of East Mecklenburg, received both a pin and a certificate in recognition of her accomplishments.

She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Payne.

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