

Third Year In Row

State Excellence Award Bestowed On City Of Raeford



RECEIVING AWARD -- On November 3, at the Raleigh Civic Center, Governor Jim Hunt [right] presented the 1983 Community of Excellence Award for the town of Raeford to Mayor J.K. McNeill.

Raeford was named last Wednesday as being one of the 132 municipalities in the state to garner the Governor's Community of Excellence Award.

The award, which was presented to Raeford for the third year in a row, lets the industrial community know that the city is actively seeking growth, North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt Jr. said prior to the presentation.

During the last six years and despite tight economic times, over 174,000 jobs have been created in the state, Hunt said.

"Many of the new jobs are because people worked hard to get industry here," the governor said.

"The Community of Excellence Awards are more than just a sign at the edge of town," Hunt said.

"It says, 'we want industry. The welcome mat is out,'" the governor said.

Since the programs inception three years ago, communities of excellence have gotten \$786 million in new industry construction and 14,700 new jobs have been created, Hunt said, adding that 99 new plants have been built.

"Community of Excellence is telling the people who and what you are," he said.

North Carolina communities must coordinate local schools with industry, the governor said.

In the future a heavier emphasis must be placed on the Community College Program in order to have a work force available for industry, he said.

Future industries will be less labor intensive and will need more technically skilled workers.

Mayor John K. McNeill accepted the award for Raeford at the Raleigh dinner hosted by Hunt.

Approximately 2,000 persons attended the function.

McNeill noted that he was pleased with the award and the honor bestowed on the city by the governor.

Some communities brought over 80 persons with their delegation to the event. Five attended from Raeford.

McNeill and City Manager Ronald Matthews were the only representatives of the city government.

Hoke High Job Center Stemming 'Drop Outs'

by Bill Lindau

Last year, Hoke County High School "lost" 122 students.

They had dropped out of school before graduating.

They consisted 9.9% of the total Hoke High students -- about 1,200.

That percentage made Hoke the third highest school system in the state in dropout rates. The only others ahead of Hoke were Brunswick with 10.9% -- 274 students; and Durham city with 11.7, a total of 313.

This year, Hoke High and other North Carolina high schools are doing something about the dropout problem: it's the Job Placement Center. Hoke was one of the school system's targeted by the State Department of Public Instruction to get a center. The centers with their attendant programs constitute the Department of Public Instruction's response to Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr.'s challenge. At a statewide conference of community leaders in May, he advocated a stepped-up program to reduce the number of school dropouts.

Hoke High is one of at least 100 North Carolina high schools which have a Job Placement Center, also called a Dropout Prevention Center.

Federal Cooperative Training and Employment Act funds are allocated to help pay the expenses.

Hoke's center, however, works for all students who need parttime jobs, though it is aimed primarily at keeping the potential dropout in school by helping him or her find a job.

So far, Mrs. Eleanor Gentry, director of the center, said Friday, the center has found jobs for 45 students, 31 in private businesses

(including some ahead in Raeford-Hoke Village shopping center stores, now nearing opening, and the others in public agencies.)

Mrs. Gentry said more than 400 Hoke High students have registered with the center since it opened at the start of the school year. It is on the campus and very plainly marked -- a sign saying "Job Placement Center" beside each door on three sides of the section of the building housing the center's office.

Mrs. Gentry is working also with Dwight Jackson, coordinator of the high school's long-established Extended Day program. Extended Day gives high school classes after school hours for students who can't attend the classes during the regular school day, for one reason or another. Most of them can't attend the regular classes because they work at needed parttime jobs.

Mrs. Gentry said of the Job Placement Center program she was very enthusiastic over it and "it is working."

The Hoke High program, however, goes beyond the problem of the student who is in danger of dropping out for need of a job. It also offers counseling and refers students to the proper counselors at school or proper public agency when the problem that threatens is something else, like personal or classroom.

Mrs. Gentry said of the latter that some students respond simply by being shown that someone cares.

Mrs. Gentry said students come by the office on their own daily during time outs from class. But others who need the help are found: when a student misses as many as

five days of classes, this indicates a possible attendance problem, and, consequently, a potential dropout. So the next step is to find out why the student has so many absences. Mrs. Gentry meet with the student's principal and talks with the student's parents to find the reason. She also helps the student's guidance counselor.

The student who is heading for a dropout is informed of the importance of graduating from high school. Mrs. Gentry pointed out that there is a strong correlation between unemployment and lack of a high school diploma. The largest percentage of the unemployed and the largest percentage of the prison population are made up of people who failed to finish high school.

Mrs. Gentry said that of Hoke High's total number of students, 75 per cent of them want jobs. She added, however, that some aren't as employable as others, and that some at this stage of development haven't the skills that will make them employable.

The Job Placement Center serves students from age 14 to 22.

Mrs. Gentry said the center's program aims to help them improve the skills that will qualify them for jobs.

To back up the program, the community's businessmen have been told individually and in groups about the student help available. For example, she has talked to the Raeford Lions Club.

She told the members during her talk that "We need your help. We need for you to be willing to take a chance on a high school student. We want you to get a return on your

money by giving us an opportunity to teach the skills you are looking for in an employee and then hiring the products..."

She also told the Lions that the Job Placement Center will be helping the students in obtaining jobs; provide a job data bank, including job listing and related information; and "we want to serve as a clearing-house for occupational opportunities for students."

The school has the vocational education program, and teachers have been helping students in vocational education to find jobs.

Before the Job Placement Center was established, however, the vocational program was the only help students had in finding jobs. Fundamentally, the job placement efforts were not centralized.

The school also has a Distributive Education program in which students work parttime in retail businesses. Incidentally, the coming of the Food Town supermarket (due to open December 1 in Raeford-Hoke Village) is a reinforcement for DE at Hoke High. Mrs. Gentry said Ralph Ketner, the head of the Food Town chain, is committed to DE and is a member of the state board for the program.

The unemployment situation in Hoke, part of the national unemployment picture, is compounding the problem of finding parttime jobs for the students, Mrs. Gentry said. But at least the potential employers are considering the students who have applied and whose records are on file at the Job Placement Center. The student whom the center will serve fills out a form containing personal information and job qualification (skills

he or she has, such as typing, taking shorthand, operating office machines, construction experience, or other), the hours the student is available to work, the types of work which interest the student, and the student's future plans.

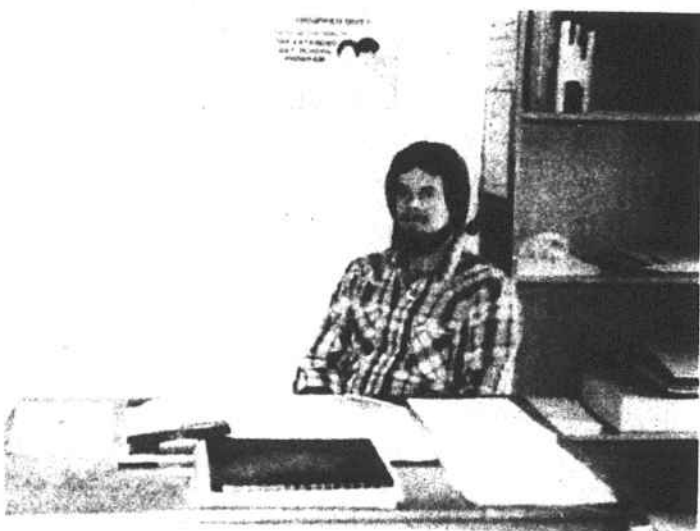
The job data bank also contains the student's record in school, including his or her record of attendance in classes. Attendance, Mrs. Gentry pointed out, is very significant, and a potential employer puts a high value on it, because it is a sign of the kind of employee the student will make.

The center also keeps an Employability/Educational Development Plan on each participating student. It contains a detailed

record of the student, including educational and employment histories, results of tests, employment/educational goals, specific problems (lacks vocational skills, legal, health, transportation, marital, among others), and action steps to meet goals.

A new development in the picture is taking place; the formation of a Collaborative Committee which will serve as a liaison between business, industry, the community and the school.

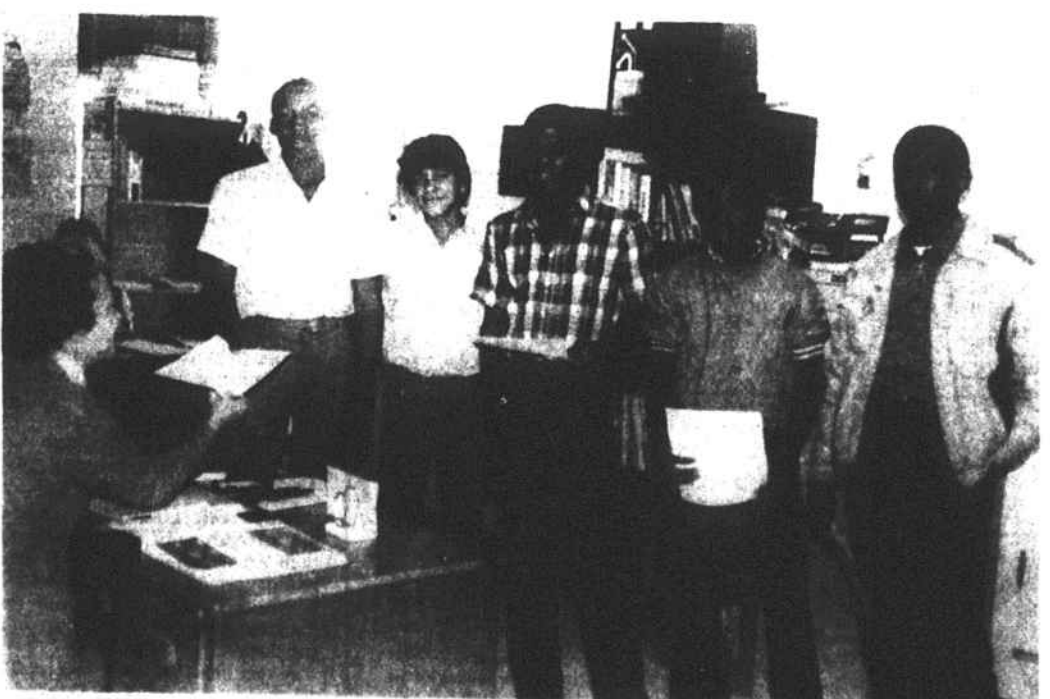
Mrs. Gentry believes that the center program has helped students, but, she added, "The proof is in the pudding." It will be known for sure when the record shows a decline in the rate of dropouts from Hoke High.



Dwight Jackson, Extended Day coordinator.



GATHERING -- These Hoke High students got together at a Job Placement Center sign Friday afternoon for the photographer during a break between classes. L-R, Joyce McRae, Vicki Jacobs, Angela Jacobs, Leshia Rogers, Marie Locklear, Lisa Bethea, Rhonda Locklear, and Angela Hunt.



GETTING APPLICATIONS -- Some Hoke High students getting applications from Job Placement Center Director Eleanor Gentry. L-R, Mrs. Gentry, Greg Monroe, Adam Ransom, John Baker, Tristan Hollmond and Terry McNeill.