

VOTE

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of 1992. Materials were available for home-school students in libraries, and for private school students upon request. After participating in the program for less than three months, nearly 40,000 students "voted" in the November election.

Program officials in Charlotte were surprised at the major turnout.

"It was phenomenal," says Murphy.

At each voting precinct in Mecklenburg County, a special area was set up for Kids Voting. About 1,400 volunteers were on hand to distribute specially made ballots and help children with the voting process.

Volunteers were recruited from parent-teacher associations, private businesses, local churches and other community groups.

The Charlotte project is funded in

part by a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation in Miami. Also, local banks, utilities and people Murphy characterizes as "our good corporate citizens" helped support the project. The Kids Voting office - located in *The Charlotte Observer* building - is a donation from the newspaper.

Charlotte Kids Voting board member Betsy Williamson says that the project has four main goals: to teach children the meaning of democracy and responsibility, to stimulate awareness, to increase the likelihood that these children will vote as adults and to increase adult voter turnout now.

Williamson coordinates efforts to get information about Kids Voting to teachers. In addition to putting together workshops for teachers, she visits principals, parents and community groups to let them know what Kids Voting is about.

So that students may become more involved in the project, Kids

Voting in Charlotte has started a student advisory board. After submitting projects showing the importance of voting to children and adults, 20 students were selected by teachers, board members and members of the League of Women Voters. Each month, the board will meet to offer ideas about how to make Kids Voting work.

"We're going to empower them to speak on behalf of students in the county," says Murphy, who adds that the board will be "an important voice for the project."

Since 1988, when the project first started in Phoenix, Ariz., Kids Voting has grown from reaching 30,000 students to an expected 2.5 million throughout the U.S. this year. According to Kids Voting USA, about 86 percent of the students and 96 percent of the teachers that participated in the program said they would like it to continue.

For information on Kids Voting, call (704)-358-5821.

MEDIA

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Administration.

At an Adoption Summit in Raleigh in July, Tar Heel media representatives heard from their counterparts in other states who have run adoption features.

Among them was Rosemary Dorr, a reporter with the *Detroit News* whose weekly column has profiled more than 1,000 children since 1987 - 70 percent of whom have found homes.

At WGHP in High Point, producers welcome the state's involvement in the effort to find homes for Tar Heel children.

"We have tried to offer our program continuously, and the only thing that has hampered us is not getting referrals from social workers," says anchor/producer Cynthia Smoot. "I'm glad to see the state is putting its weight behind this now. That's key to the success of these programs."

Besides raising public awareness of children's needs, Smoot hopes the state will help track the success of "Wednesday's Child-type" features.

"One of our frustrations is we haven't been able to document placements except in a case-by-case way," she says. "We'd like to be able to do more follow-up stories so that people who might be kicking around the idea of adoption, but are nervous about it, can see adoptions that

work."

By the first week in August, editors at *The Charlotte Observer* had received five dozen calls about the inaugural "Sunday's Child" feature they ran July 24.

Features reporter Richard Maschal was initially skeptical about the adoption stories.

"My first reaction was that this was 'Pet of the Week,'" he says. "But the thing you realize about it - and the response [to the feature] shows this - is that the newspaper is such a powerful medium and search light. You shine that search light and it has a result...If two kids get adopted from this, that's fabulous."

Suzanne Brown, Sunday features editor at the *The News & Observer*, says the Raleigh paper plans to begin a "Sunday's Child" feature sometime this fall.

Deitch says North Carolina is the first state to try a statewide media recruitment campaign for "adoption features."

Despite their success in other parts of the country, he says, such programs are only part of the solution to the problems facing children.

"Our project is not the only answer," Deitch says. "It's at the end of the line when the kids have already lost their homes."

For information about the media program or children awaiting adoption in North Carolina, call the Division of Social Services, (919) 733-3801.

SCHOOL

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North Raleigh, which is home to Wake Summerbridge.

The private school's sprawling campus hosted 36 students from a variety of Wake neighborhoods, rural and urban. For six humid weeks, the youngsters studied physics, discussed literature, and pondered the horrors of the Holocaust as well as the words of Taoist philosopher Lao-tse. They took home about three to four hours of homework each night.

All the classes were taught and designed by high school and college students from schools as far away as New Orleans, who are considering teaching careers.

"It's a multiple-win kind of situation," Ledyard says. "You have kids who are growing excited about education. You have young adults testing a whole new avenue of teaching for themselves. Plus, from an institutional view, it brings public and private schools together."

Ledyard and Monaco, director of Wake Summerbridge, first met at the Kentucky Country Day School in Louisville, where Ledyard taught and Monaco studied. After Monaco graduated from Hamilton College in New York in 1989, he returned to Louisville to work with a Summerbridge program there.

"Before that I taught at Summerbridge Cincinnati and just fell in love with the program" Monaco says.

While in Louisville, Monaco contacted his former high school mentor, - who had by then moved to Raleigh to become Ravenscroft's headmaster - and told him about the nonprofit education program. Would Ledyard

be interested in having a program in his community?

In one year, Ledyard had enlisted the support of his school board to donate campus space, and persuaded the Wake County Board of Education to let the nonprofit recruit students. All that was left for Monaco to do was secure funding - about \$70,000.

Not a simple task, as any director of a start-up nonprofit knows well. But Monaco had the Summerbridge name behind him. The program dates back to 1978, when a former public school teacher founded the first Summerbridge program in San Francisco. Programs now operate throughout the U.S., including cities such as New Orleans and Boston. And they enjoy widespread support, including annual teaching grants from the John Motley Morehead Foundation in Chapel Hill.

In fact, President Clinton in June named 17 Summerbridge programs - including Wake's - to his new AmeriCorps National Service Program, which matches young people with community service jobs and gives educational stipends to participating students and grants to participating nonprofits. AmeriCorps will fund young administrators at Summerbridge.

With that kind of cache, Monaco quickly secured funding from a number of sources, including the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the Glaxo Special Projects Fund, and was launched Wake Summerbridge in June.

"I can assure you this one's off to a great start," says Chuck Lovelace, executive director of the Morehead Foundation, who attended an open house at Wake Summerbridge in July.

On that day, one of the most

enthusiastic supporters of the program was 11-year-old Duane Doster. Last spring, teachers at Leesville Middle School discussed holding Duane back in the 6th grade because he had begun to spend time with a truant crowd, was skipping class and getting into trouble.

But Monaco recognized Duane's academic potential when he submitted essays and standardized test scores for admission to Wake Summerbridge.

"This is the classic story of the student who got in with the wrong crowd and got labeled as a trouble maker," Monaco says.

At the open house, Duane stands outside his physics class, shifting from one black high-top sneaker to the other.

"It helps me with my organization and helps me prepare for the next grade," he says, of his new interest in school. "I'm learning some pre-algebra. It sort of gets me ahead of people. It's fun learning here because there are only four people in each class."

Duane's future dreams?

"Oh, aerospace engineering," he says. "Hopefully, go to Morehouse College," in Atlanta.

But Duane won't limit himself to rocket science. He wants to leave time for his mythology studies.

"I'm working on soap sculptures of Greek Gods," he says. "Hercules is my favorite."

Like many of the Wake Summerbridge students, the 11-year-old is quick to admit what his summer would have looked like without the school program.

"I'd be sitting at home watching talk shows and stuff on TV," he says, "and I'd probably be mad at myself because I should be doing something else."

A primer for parents Answers to questions about adoption

The state Division of Social Services has come up with these answers to frequently asked questions about adoption:

Q: How do I find out about children who are available for adoption?

A: In addition to a recently launched media campaign to profile children awaiting homes, North Carolina's Division of Social Services publishes a "Photo Adoption Listings Services" book containing biographical information on more than 500 children.

Q: Do adoption agencies charge a fee?

A: Public agencies charge no fees for adoption services. Private agencies generally do not charge fees for adoptions involving special needs children, but most charge fees for other adoption services.

Q: How long does it take to adopt a child?

A: It can take six months or more after submitting an application before a child is placed in a home. After that, another six months to a year may pass before the adoption is made final in court.

Q: Can I get financial assistance for adopting special needs children?

A: Yes. The amount of assistance is based on the child's background and needs and may cover medical expenses and some costs associated with the adoption process.

Q: What are requirements to become an adoptive parent?

A: You do not have to have a high income or be married to adopt a child. You may have children of your own or other adopted children. You don't have to own a home. You can begin as a foster parent before committing to legal adoption.

Source: N.C. Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office

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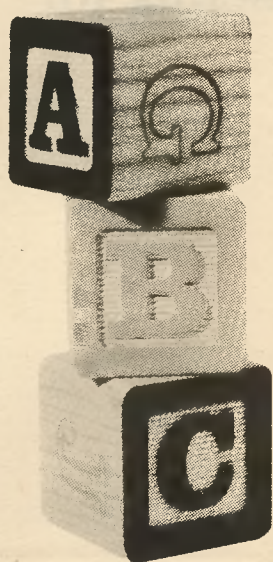
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