

Head Start, Kenan have openings

The Head Start program marks its 31st year serving preschool children in Cleveland County in 1996.

The county-wide program is administered by the Kings Mountain School District and serves 263 children ages 3-5 in 16 classes throughout the three local school systems. Four of the 16 classes are funded through Smart Start (Cleveland County Partnership for Children). One class is funded by Smart Start and is housed at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Shelby. This class is based on the Kenan Family Literacy Model that allows parents and children to go to school together with parents working toward their high school diplomas. The class began operation in February 1994 and had its first two graduates with the May 1996 class of Cleveland Community College.

Patti Norman, director, said "parents are making a major commitment to themselves and their children coming to school every day with their children to continue their own education."

Norman said the Kenan family literacy model departs from traditional programs in two ways:

"It treats the family as a whole instead of addressing parents and children separately.

"It addresses the broad spectrum of a parent's needs - as a confident individual, as a future employee, and as a nurturing parent.

A day in the program begins

with the arrival of children and parents. Most children and parents are transported by the Transportation Authority of Cleveland County (TACC). One mother rides the school bus with her child, serving as a volunteer bus monitor. After breakfast together in the school cafeteria, parents and children go their separate ways. Parents go into a classroom with an instructor from Cleveland Community College where they are enrolled in an adult education program based on their individual needs. During the same time children participate in a regular Head Start program based on the state Circle of Childhood curriculum for preschoolers. Parents again meet the children for a shared lunch.

In the afternoon, parents and children come back together for a period of joint activities. During this time children are the leaders, initiating projects in which their parents can play along. The classroom teacher also uses a portion of this time to demonstrate activities that parents and children can do together at home.

While children nap, the parents meet with teachers or participate in other programs. The moms have enjoyed training on parenting skills by Diane Davis of United Family Services, a member of the Smart Start Neighborhood Team. Teresa Clary, Head Start Education Coordinator, has taught Motherhead classes. Motherhead,

Inc is a nationally acclaimed organization combining the teaching of literacy skills with child development and family empowerment. Parents and children learn to use the power of language to discover more about themselves, their families, and their communities. The mothers are learning to be story readers, writers, and tellers in a group structure that supports their own sense of worth and ability and encourages them to be reading role models for their children. Lois Owens of the county Agricultural Extension office provided classes for the group on nutrition, cooking, safe handling of food, and budgeting.

Course work for the parents at the college is based on their individual high school transcripts. Most of the mothers need 10 to 20 units to complete high school. Elective courses include Family Living and other classes designed to offer help with household management. The first grade report for the year yielded all A's. Susan Beam, instructor, says the students are "very cooperative, very understanding of the materials, and persistent, highly motivated and determined.

Most of the parents are single mothers with home and family responsibilities in spite of difficult circumstances. "They're here trying to accomplish something wonderful," said Beam. "It's a wonderful program. The students show such support for each other. I've learned from

them as much as they've learned from me."

Students are so motivated that they have requested extra work. In the winter quarter students attended class 11 extra days beyond the scheduled school days. Although the Head Start program ends in May the students requested to continue their classes in the summer. The college scheduled two night classes for them during the summer months last year.

There are still openings for the Kenan Model Head Start class as well as other Head Start classes throughout the county. Call the Head Start office at 734-5660 for an application or more information.

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Kids Etc. registration set

Kids Etc., Kings Mountain District Schools' before and after school care program, will hold registration for the 1996-97 school year August 5 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at West Elementary School.

All parents who plan to enroll their child in the program are urged to attend the orientation. For more information, call Director Patsy Walker at 739-8622.

Walker said Kids Etc. serves more than 200 students each year, offering an affordable, safe and caring environment for elementary school children.

Kids Etc. programs are held at the child's own school and eliminates the need for transportation for children, Walker said. Participants spend their afternoon time in a familiar environment with their friends.

Walker said the programs'

goal is to make after school time meaningful, rewarding and fun for each child. In addition to snack, homework time and activity centers, specialty instructors and city resources will visit the program regularly. These activities taught by specialists are designed to expose children to a variety of different experiences. Examples of specialty events include cooking, fire safety, self-esteem program, balloon sculpture, science programs, drama, and more. Specialty classes are rotated throughout the year and are based on teacher availability. Children make individual choices to participate based on their interest and are guided by the program's professional staff.

"Children participating in Kids Etc. are approached in a

positive manner and treated with respect," Walker said. "Consistent, age appropriate limits help children be successful in the program. Children will learn self discipline, respect for others and how to make good choices. Appropriate behavior is acknowledged and rewarded, misbehavior is redirected. At Kids Etc. we view ourselves as partners with parents to provide the best care for their child."

Walker said Kids Etc. exceeds child care program standards set forth by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The program is registered with the Child Care Resources Center of North Carolina. Each staff member is certified in CPR and first aid training.

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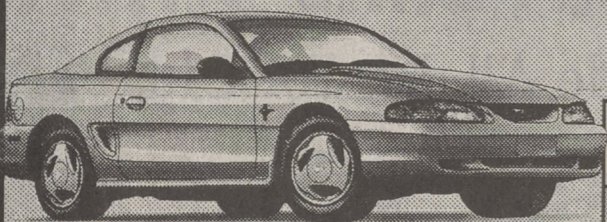
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