

## Pastors, students discuss ways faith community can help kids

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
Staff Writer

SHELBY - Pastors from the Unity Team of Cleveland County met with students and school personnel last week to find out how the faith community can support the new school system.

The group, which met at the Communities in Schools office, heard compelling stories from students.

Ashley Stinchcomb, a Kings Mountain High School senior, talked about staying in school following her daughter's birth a year ago. The child was born with an enlarged brain ventricle, cysts on her kidneys and other problems. She is currently being treated by 16 physicians.

Stinchcomb said teen mothers need someone to help them set goals which will keep them in school. Assistance with baby sitting is also beneficial, she said.

Julius Kee, a senior at Shelby High School, talked about the role Rev. Eddie Ponder had played in his life. The two were matched in a mentor program when Julius was a student at Graham Elementary. They drifted apart but later reconnected when Julius was 13 years old.

He began attending Ponder's church where he is now active. The young man encouraged volunteers to provide supervision and activities for children after school hours and not to give up.



Jesse Teague of KMHS (top) discusses problems students face. Rev. William Thompson, below, makes a point.

"Stay involved with the kids. Eventually you will see changes," he said.

Dimayquaye Smith, a junior at Burns, echoed that theme.

"If you know a child, try to reach him, stand behind him or her. Keep that child involved in activities," Smith said.

Jesse Teague, a sophomore at Kings Mountain High School, talked about how easily drugs can be

obtained. He told the group that some of his friends are already alcoholics.

Topzie McCluney, a principal at Township #3 School, told the group how important pastors are. Often students would prefer she telephone their parents than their minister regarding discipline problems.

"You play a major impact on students," she said.

Rev. William Thompson, pastor of St. Peter's Missionary Baptist in Grover and moderator of the Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Association, told the group that those who had already arrived had an obligation to those who had not yet made it.

Rev. John Houze of People's Baptist was pleased with the turnout. Approximately 54 clergy and other church representatives and school personnel attended.

His church hosts a homework program on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 to 8 p.m.

"Kids are asking for the

tutoring. We've seen improvements," Houze said.

The church also serves a snack supper to the students and could use donations to help support that ministry.

Rev. John Boggs of Central United Methodist in Shelby contrasted how welcoming Cleveland County Schools are to the churches in Charlotte where he served before.

"We know we are welcome and wanted. The bottom line is find a school closest to your church and get connected," Boggs said.

The Unity Team will host a prayer service in Kings Mountain April 22. The purpose is to promote cooperation following merger.

## CrossWalk opens Thursday night in downtown KM

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CrossWalk 2004 audience members will find themselves in the midst of a bustling middle eastern market place and later surrounded by actors calling for the crucifixion of Christ.

A dramatic hybrid of passion play, parade and visit to stations of the cross, the production takes around 75 minutes. Audience members start out in a downtown courtyard where they meet tour guide Joseph of Arimethea, the man who gave his tomb for Jesus.

Joseph guides the group into an alley which serves as the "city gates" of Jerusalem. Here they meet Malchus and his family. Invented by playwright Reg Alexander, this character owns the Upper Room

where Jesus ate his last meal with his disciples. He explains the Jewish holiday Passover and its relationship to Easter.

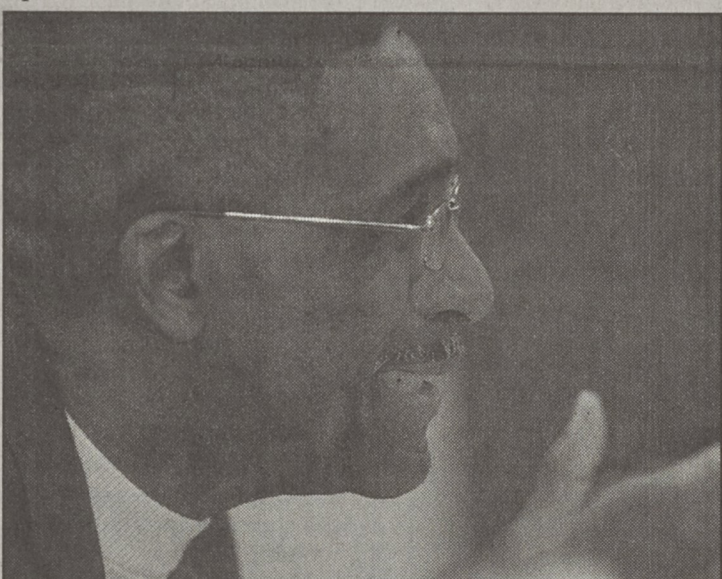
From there, Joseph takes the audience to Kings Mountain Baptist Church's parking lot which has been transformed into a market-place.

"The idea is to absorb them into Jerusalem, the sights, smells and sounds you might expect to find," Alexander said.

There they meet Jesus and his disciples. The walk ends behind the Woman's Club building with an empty tomb scene.

Alexander is producing the CrossWalk through his company Regal Ventures, a non-profit Christian event planning company.

According to Alexander, See CrossWalk, 10B



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