



Dixie Youth honored

Some of the members of the Kings Mountain YMCA Dixie Youth 11/12 baseball team, above, were present in uniform for last Tuesday's meeting of city council. Mayor Rick Murphrey, above presents certificates of appreciation as well as city pins to the young people. The team placed 6th of 16 in state championship play.

photo by ELLIS NOELL

KM teacher wins \$2K Unsung Heroes grant

Meredith Alexander, a teacher at North Elementary, is one of only 100 winners across the nation, and one of five in the entire state of North Carolina to win \$2,000 for an innovative teaching program in the 16th year of the ING Unsung Heroes Awards Program competition.

She is now being considered for the top three national winners who will receive an additional \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$25,000 to bring their programs to life.

Alexander's winning project, "Read and Ride," incorporates literature and fitness to create a new and exciting way for students to learn. The "Read and Ride" classroom engages students in reading while riding stationary bikes. The classroom would be used for centers, accelerated reader time or as a reward. Alexander hopes the project will motivate students to read and stay active physically. In addition to reading and riding, students will also solve math problems and learn about healthy living habits. The project aims to increase student reading and comprehension scores as well as help them improve their focus and physical fitness.

The ING Unsung Heroes® program strives to uplift, inspire and honor educators who are making a significant impact on their students and the educational experience in the classroom. Winning programs over the

years have exemplified teachers who utilize innovative and engaging teaching methods and techniques to improve learning for America's students. Because many educators are often under-appreciated, underpaid, and unrecognized, ING U.S. continues to salute them through its ING Unsung Heroes program, now in its 16th year.

As a benchmark, studies at another school showed that when students attended the "Read and Ride" room for 20 minutes three times per week, they had an average increase in test scores of 113 points of growth and an overall reading proficiency of 61 percent. Alexander, who resides in Cherryville, hopes her students will increase their exposure to daily, healthy living activities.

"ING is proud of the hard work and dedication of all of our nation's teachers," said Maliz Beams, CEO of ING U.S. Retirement Services. "It is a privilege to invest in the innovative ideas of educators across the United States who are preparing our children for the future. We hope the additional funds Meredith Alexander is awarded through ING Unsung Heroes will help sustain her program and continue to make an impact on the children in her community."

ING U.S., a leading provider of retirement plans and programs for teachers,

began the ING Unsung Heroes program in 1996 to demonstrate the company's commitment to the education community. Over the years, the program has awarded nearly \$4 million to 1,700 kindergarten through 12th-grade educators for

their innovative teaching methods, creative educational projects, and ability to positively influence the children they teach.

The 2012 ING Unsung Heroes winners were selected from a group of more than 1,300 applications. To

learn more about this year's winning projects, as well as those from previous years, visit the ING Unsung Heroes website (unsungheroes.com). More information about the program can also be found on the ING Unsung Heroes

Facebook page (facebook.com/unsungheroesgrant) where people can like and share the page to encourage more educators to apply. Applications for the 2013 ING Unsung Heroes awards are available on the website.

5 local elementary schools designated Title I Reward Schools

Five local elementary schools are designated as Title I Reward Schools for being among the highest performing in the state.

East, Fallston, Grover, North and Washington elementary schools have been identified among the top 10 percent of all Title I schools in the state for sustaining student achievement over a number of years.

Beginning with the 2012-13 school year, 120 Title I schools comprise the state's list of Reward Schools. Eighty-one (81) are identified as highest-performing (including the five local elementary schools), and 39 schools are identified as having made the most progress over a number of years.

And, for the second year in a row, Cleveland County has an elementary school included among the top of these highest performing schools. Fallston Elementary was among the top Title I schools in the state last year and a finalist in the Distinguished Schools Program. This year, East Elementary is among the top 10 percent of the Reward Schools.

This year, 12 schools (the top 10 percent) are invited to submit portfolios to

identify the best practices contributing to their schools' successes. They have the opportunity to represent the state in the National Title I Distinguished Schools program and are eligible for Reward School Mini Grants, with a base allotment of \$20,000 and additional funding per the school's ADM (average daily membership).

East Elementary Principal Eric Lamanna said a key to East's success is the commitment by its staff to help students succeed. East's culture is one of team spirit and focusing on putting the children first, he said.

"All our certified staff members stay after school and tutor students at least one day a week during the entire second semester," Lamanna said.

Fallston Principal Mary Frye cited numerous programs used to target deficiencies and intervene and improve students' basic reading and math skills. She said student progress is closely monitored and assessed and best practices from proven instructional leaders are used.

Both Mrs. Frye and Mr. Lamanna said their schools offer numerous recognition programs to encourage and reward

their students' performance. Both partner closely with businesses, agencies and others in the community to provide for their students and their families. Both schools also promote parent involvement and emphasize parental communication.

Title I schools (about one half of the state's public schools) are subject to be categorized under three designations: Priority, Focus and Reward schools. This year's designations are based on 2010-11 data.

School districts that receive Title I funds must use them in schools where at least 40 percent of the children receive free or reduced-cost meals. Eligible schools may use Title I funds for school-wide programs that serve all children in the school. Currently all local elementary schools and Shelby Intermediate have schoolwide programs.

Cleveland County Schools is to receive more than \$4.7 million in 2012-13 that will provide reading labs, in-class and pull-out programs, preschool programs and parent centers. The Title I program provides funding for 33.5 teaching positions, 43 teacher assistants, two parent center coordinators and two assistants and three curriculum coordinators.

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