

# Basics training

## Summer program a learning experience for Monroe

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By ZACHARY C. PENCE  
for the *Daily Telegraph*

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PETERSTOWN — Those who participated in the Peterstown Middle School summer education program feel they have covered the basics, which is exactly what they set out to do.

The Community Learning Center program, which began this summer and will continue for the next three years, is the result of a \$1.4 million federal grant to Monroe County Schools.

The money was provided with the agreement that Monroe

County would use the funds for the enrichment of its population (adults as well as children). There were three other CLC locations besides the Peterstown division.

Peterstown Middle School's summer curriculum, which ended this past Friday, consisted of teaching basic skills to fifth through eighth grade students. The teachers emphasized the importance of reading, writing, mathematics and home economics.

In addition to the professional instruction offered, area citizens visited the students and shared their talents and trades with the

children for enrichment purposes. According to several students, the enrichment portion of the school day was the most enjoyable. The hands-on activities are a valuable learning tool, according to Cindy Laws, program coordinator.

Apart from the classroom, students participated in weekly field trips to local areas of interest, such as a local trout farm and took the time to enjoy such activities as bowling, swimming, golfing and playing in the park. The children also made a visit to Springfield Nursing Home, where they interacted with senior citizens.

# onroe students

Students involved in the summer school included those from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Laws thinks many underprivileged children have, and many more could, benefit from the training offered. She also said the program is of great benefit to those children living in isolated areas, because it provides them a chance to leave their houses to learn and socialize.

The summer classes were kept small, with a student to teacher ratio of about 7 to 1. "One of the

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Staff photo by Eric DiNe

## Summer school...

Justin Stover, Hope White, program coordinator Cindy Laws, Be Ann Hoke, Shane Moore, instructor Sue Thomas, instructor Eric Smith and Kate Dimarzo work on craft projects last week.

## Basics...

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greatest benefits is the personal connection that is formed between the student and teacher," said Laws. This relationship is possible "because the children receive much more one-on-one attention," she said.

"I have discovered that one-on-one teaching is very effective," said Betty Brown, who taught the students home economics. Sue Thomas, math teacher, agreed with Brown and added that she was able to teach her students in ways that seemed impossible before.

In addition, both instructors concluded that smaller classes lack the influence of peer pressure normally present in the classroom and therefore have fewer disciplinary problems. "They don't seem to be showing off for each other as much," said Thomas. On the wall of one classroom there are lists of rules created and followed by the students. "They stick to them," said one instructor.

According to Laws, the students have shown the most improvement in their attitudes toward learning. "The attitude of almost all the children has improved since we started," said Brown. Furthermore, Brown thinks many children who exhibited behavior problems during the regular school year showed great improvement this summer.

While ultimately rewarding, the program contained its own unique

dilemmas. Due to the current renovations of Peterstown Middle School, classes were held in the small, cramped band building across the street. "This building is much like an old-time one-room school house," said Laws. The teachers were in constant competition with the constant cacophony of sounds from bulldozers and masonry saws.

Food was another problem because of the lack of kitchen facilities. Lunch was brought from James Monroe High School every day and bottled water was bought from a nearby spring, while Brown's students took care of creating the desserts.

A survey to parents of those attending the program indicated an overwhelmingly positive attitude. Parents believed the experience to be highly beneficial and plan to have their children return next summer. Students also are highly appreciative for the experience and seem eager to return next summer.

The success of this summer hopefully will be overshadowed by the upcoming programs, which will include adult education classes offering residents the opportunity to take art, theater, language, computer courses, etc. By this fall, the Peterstown division of CLC should, pending the completed renovations of Peterstown Middle School, be able to use the kitchen, classroom and stage facilities.

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