

CHATHAM CountyLine

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FREE ~ GRATIS

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➔ Diana Hales reports on the Chatham Commissioners marathon meeting held on Nov. 19.

Task Force takes on school bullies

By Deborah Meyer

Jordan Perlow is a very brave girl. Because of the courage Perlow showed in sharing with her parents that she was being bullied in school, she set off a chain of events that led to people from all over the county coming together to form and participate in the Chatham County Bully Prevention Task Force.

“My daughter was at Margaret B. Pollard Middle School in the 7th grade in 2010 and suddenly she began going through hell,” said Erica Perlow, Jordan’s mother. “Girls who were friends began shunning her, laughing at her when she walked by, and gossiping about her—all the stuff that mentally debilitates. This is relational aggression, very typical of girl bullying.”

As explained in the bully prevention task force’s October/November newsletter, relational aggression is “manipulation calculated to hurt or control another child’s ability to maintain rapport with peers.”

Perlow went to Pollard’s administrators and teachers, who were very responsive, and added her and her close friend Cindy Lodestro, also the mother of a Pollard student, to the school’s Positive Behavior Intervention System. “It is a state mandate that every school has this committee. It is lovely since it rewards students for being good, but it is not the same as preventing bullying but we helped get it on Pollard’s agenda and then we created a committee on bullying prevention with the PTA,” Perlow said. “I would recommend that this be done at every school. If parents don’t get involved, it is not going to happen as effectively. We sort of hold the key for so many things.”

Hearing Jordan speak at a Board of Education meeting in the fall of 2010 about her experience, Chatham County Superintendent of Schools Robert Logan asked to meet

with her and her mother.

“I went saying that this problem is huge, there is no place it does not exist, and I believed we needed basic standards to operate from throughout the county schools and that all our children should be taught the same thing about bullying,” Perlow said.

Her idea was to create the Chatham County Bully Prevention Task Force. “With open arms they welcomed us,” Perlow said.

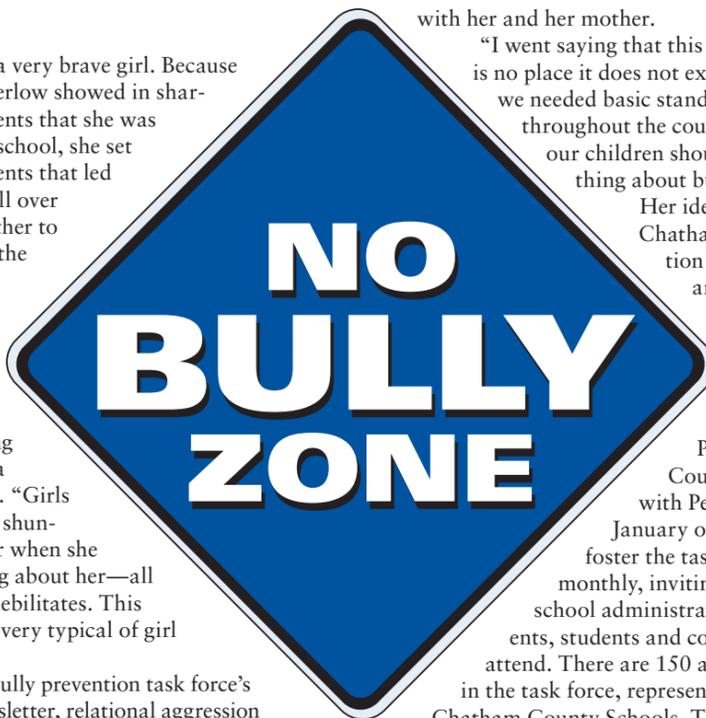
George Greger-Holt, Executive Director of Student Services and Support Programs for Chatham County Schools, has worked with Perlow and Lodestro since

January of 2011 to found and foster the task force, which meets monthly, inviting all Chatham County school administrators, teachers, staff, parents, students and community members to attend. There are 150 active members involved in the task force, representing about half of the 17 Chatham County Schools. The goal is 100 percent representation. The next meeting is December 11 at Sage Academy in Siler City.

“One of the things we are working on as a result of information from the task force and other researchers looking at bullying situations is the importance of bystander intervention,” said Greger-Holt. “We want people knowing that it does not mean you have to say something but just going and standing with the person being bullied. If one or ten people would do this, the bullying will stop.”

In the recent bullying survey given to Chatham County students, grades 3-10, one of the questions asked what students did when they saw bullying. One of the choices is that they ignored it. Greger-Holt said that the percentage of students who ignored it went from 32 percent to 24 percent since the survey was started in 2003-2004. Another

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The ultimate moral question

PROSPERITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By Gary Simpson and Sonny Keisler

Earth with its finite and interdependent land, water and atmosphere is nature’s endowment to humanity. It is our legacy to manage for the sustenance, pleasure and prosperity of “all creatures great and small”. Because everyone shares in the grand journey on Earth, it is our moral and religious duty to help one another and all creatures prosper and thrive.

This is the message given to us by the Biblical story of Noah and the Ark. Here, God instructed Noah to build an Ark and take on board his family and two of all living creatures so as to save them from certain extinction. This message also is emphasized by the Biblical creation story in which we are told that the wellbeing of human beings presupposes the existence of all other life forms ... “grass ... herb...fruit tree...fowl, great whales ...creepy thing ...beasts of the earth”. In more recent times the same message has been offered by the Roman Catholic Church, when in 2008, it stated that polluting the earth ... land, water and air ... is a social sin. In equation form, these messages can be stated this way: prosperity = (natural resources + environmental resources) ÷ population x (technology + work).

The question in the 21st century is whether we as individuals and as a society will adopt the wisdom of the ancients as highlighted both by Genesis and the Vatican. The question is whether we will honor the moral obligation to be good stewards of God’s Creation and prosper or whether we will ignore the responsibility and travel down the well-worn path to perdition and ruin.

People with a vision that transcends time and self often describe their awareness and passion for living on earth in this way: “The life I have is the Deity’s

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Winner’s Fest Gala enjoyable way to help young children

by Genevieve Megginson

Make plans now to attend the Chatham County Partnership for Children’s annual Winner’s Fest Benefit Gala on Saturday, February 9, 2013. You will enjoy delicious food and lively music. You may also go home up to \$1,500 richer. What you really will be doing, however, is helping to make a difference in the life of a young child in your community.

Since 1994, Chatham County Partnership for Children has provided programs that support families, improve child care and children’s health, and give children a solid educational foundation that can help them reach their greatest potential. Chatham County Partnership for Children also provides training in best practices for early childhood teachers and caregivers, financial assistance to families that cannot afford quality child care, assists child care centers in improving their programs, and oversees pre-kindergarten programs for at-risk children through Smart Start, NC Pre-K, and Chatham Ready Schools. Through the Shape NC project, the Partnership combats rising rates of obesity in young children by promoting the early development of healthy lifestyles through improved nutrition, increased physical activity, and natural outdoor learning environments.

A child’s earliest experiences are often the most important for future development. Brain scan research has shown that 90 percent of brain development occurs



Justin Johnson Jazz (above) and Dynamo Muse Productions will be performing at the Winner’s Fest Gala to be held at Governors Club on February 9.

before children enter kindergarten. North Carolina has become a leading example of the benefits of quality early childhood education. A 2011 Duke University study showed that 3rd grade students in counties that received more Smart Start and NC Pre-K funding had higher English and math scores, and lower placement in special education classes when compared to students in other counties. Leading economists, including Nobel Prize winner James Heckman and Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, say investing in high-quality early education is both cost effective and critical for our long-term economic viability. Despite all the research and support, funding for early childhood education in North Carolina has decreased.

Recently, the Partnership’s budget has been strained by an increase in community needs and a decrease in state funding. In Chatham County the overall poverty rate is around 12 percent but an estimated 32 percent of children under the age of five live in poverty (families earning less than 76 percent of State Median Income as of June 2011). The amount of state money invested in early childhood education in Chatham has declined by \$595,721 since 2008. While many state funded programs have suffered, this cut has been disproportionate, as early childhood investments now account for 1.3 percent of the total state budget as compared to 1.8 percent in 2008. Basic programs and services funded by Smart

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