

Union doing more than teaching three R's

By **Macon County News** - February 28, 2019

Diane Peltz – Contributing Writer

At the Monday, Feb. 25 meeting of the Macon County School board, members learned about after school activities currently being offered at Union Academy.

Teachers at Union Academy (UA) teach the requisite reading, writing and arithmetic, but with some new programs recently implemented teachers are now being trained to teach "life skills" or "soft skills."

Thanks to several grant programs, the Botvin Life Skills Class is helping students learn how to deal with real world issues, such as drugs and alcohol use.

With a little help from a workbook titled "Basic Life Skill Training," teachers present different scenarios regarding the consequences of drug and alcohol abuse. The class also touches on issues such as paying rent at age 16 and the emotions and stress that go along with that obligation under the premise that often living on your own at a young age leads to depression which can lead to drug abuse. This program is helping students become aware of how real life situations can affect them and ways to cope with them.

Habitudes is another program that has been implemented at UA. Thanks to the Growing Leaders Foundation Grant, this program teaches how to treat people and how people can affect you by the way you are treated by them. It is equated to a hot air balloon which can rise up or down depending on circumstances. Students can raise up their peers or bring them down.

In March, First Alliance Church (FAC) will begin a program at UA through art and music. The FAC club meets every other week and focuses on helping students develop meaningful relationships with adults through the love of art and music. A portion of each meeting will be dedicated to a confidence building activity.

The Angel Youth Night Out is a program that teaches students what to do in an emergency situation, such as car trouble. Who do you call, how do you get your car fixed? Thanks to a Grant by Angel Medical Center, students are learning about real life situations and how to deal with them, where to go to get help, and who to call. The program teaches youth who they can

talk to such as police, firefighters etc. It gets the students involved in the community, addressing the disconnect the students often feel.

UA has partnered with Western Carolina University (WCU), Southwestern Community College (SCC), and NC Works. Through WCU, students learn how to fill out the FASFA grant application for college. The students are required to create a senior portfolio which includes applications, resumes and other essential documents to get ready for work or college. This year, three \$1000 scholarships will be awarded to students for participation in the program.

Another brainchild begun at UA is the Video Game Club. This club teaches students how to play games without getting upset. Games are supplied by the school or students can bring in an approved game and they are shown how to play fairly without losing their "cool."

The Molding Tomorrow's Leaders Club has been busy placing mulch in the garden, clearing and sorting clothes for local charities and making valentines and exchanging storywalk boards at Wesley Park and the Greenway.

School calendar alignment

John DeVille, Social Studies teacher at Franklin High School explained why a bill which would allow the school calendar to be aligned with the local college schedules would be beneficial for Macon County schools. Many students who are dual-enrolled have two different calendars to follow. The bill known as NC House Bill 79 would give local school boards of education the ability to determine the dates of opening and closing public schools. The board is trying to find a way to balance the calendar with an equal number of days of school in the first quarter as there are in the second. As it stands, there are 79 days in the first quarter and 91 in the second quarter, which creates an unbalanced calendar. Dr Baldwin took note saying that with the weather being a factor especially in January, it would be difficult to get a truly balanced calendar. House Bill 79 will go before the NC Carolina Senate in the near future.

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