

## Mentors

(Continued from Page 1) African-Americans, and even more so for boys. If you haven't gotten to them by then," she said, "it's tougher once they're in middle school."

Mentors spend, on average, an hour every two weeks with the students and often devote more time. In addition to campus-based involvements, they arrange and conduct field trips, supervise other activities and "anything we ask them to do here," said a grateful Foster.

The program is "for those who are at-risk of going into special education programs because of behavior or grades. Those are two of the major areas," said Mosley. "We hope to intervene by mentoring."

Asked about early results among the students, Foster responded quickly. "Attendance," she said, "truancy was a problem with a good number of them." Referring to the mentors, she said, "The kids they work with tend to come to school more, and there's been a reduction in office referrals related to discipline issues."

Said Mosley: "One of the strong points of the program is that we are collaborating with the Black Nurses Association, the Parent Focus Group- which provides tutoring service, and we will be partnering with the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives."

Concerning academic performance, Foster said, "We are currently looking at that right now, so we will have that information. I think there should be an improvement based on more time on task," she reasoned, "so I think there should be more of an improvement academically."

Foster hopes the mentoring program will help reverse some of what has been called the "warehousing" of children, especially minority students, into special education programs. "It may be that with some efforts early in their school life they might be prevented from being assigned to special education," she said. "Maybe tutoring, or just an interested adult, those are just some of the things that could prevent the unnecessary categorization of children."

## Schools get rights funds

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) - Virginia will give \$10 million to two historically black universities as part of a settlement to end a 30-year desegregation battle with the federal government.

Under the agreement with the U.S. Department of Education announced Tuesday, the money will be used to improve buildings and finance six new academic degrees each at Norfolk State University and Virginia State University.

Both schools are to get the money by Sept. 30, 2004.

The settlement comes 32 years after the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights informed Virginia it was operating a public system of higher education segregated by race.

In response, Virginia developed a plan to dismantle the system and attract black students to predominantly white colleges.

In the settlement, the department acknowledged that a three-year review of Virginia's system found "no lingering vestiges of historical discrimination."

## Childrens' gifts stolen

DOVER, Fla. (AP) - Holiday gifts for foster children were stolen from a truck, and gift drive organizers believe the thieves knew what they were taking.

The gifts, worth more than \$10,000, were reported stolen Monday from a truck parked at the house of one of the organizers.

Cindy Sawyer said the thieves probably knew they were taking gifts for foster children because the gifts have been stored on her property the past three years.

She said the thieves took only

items that were likely to be easily sold.

"Basically, they got all our teen-age stuff," said Mac MacNeel, who founded the Foster Angels program. "TV sets, boom boxes, Rollerblades, CDs, keyboards."

A sheriff's spokesman said investigators had no immediate suspects. The Foster Angels of Hillsborough County program provides holiday gifts for nearly 1,300 foster children in the county, near Tampa.

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