



These photos by GUY ABERNETHY

Though reading remains the priority, math, science and computer skills also are on the agenda in the Parents and Children Advancing Together program. Tutor Theresa Sharkey works with students (above, 7), in the computer lab at Covenant Chapel Church.

Reading The Future

Volunteers help students advance through one-on-one attention.

By GARY STEELE
The News Tribune

SUNSHINE SPRINGS — Instructors Lorenz D. and Jenika Richardson, E, joined students from the back page of "Jerk and the Beavers."

"I read it 18 times," Instructors said. The children, E, Doro for INSTRUCTORS.

This is what Christiana Worley likes to hear. She is on a mission to teach children to read.

"It's important to help these kids get out of poverty," said Worley, program director of University Community Ministries.

"That's my mission, I'm working toward that goal."

The vision is faith-based and goal-oriented. When they were two years ago, Worley and Myla Keavara founded the after-school program Parents and Children Advancing Together and set up in the rubens of Sunshine Springs Elementary School.

Recently, Worley received the free program a few blocks to create spacious headquarters at Covenant Chapel Church, 912 E. Palmetto St. The focus remains on Sunshine Springs Elementary, a school where about 95 percent of students qualify for free meals.

Spread over two floors, the has classrooms, a library, a computer lab and an arts and science room, instead of about



Jenika Richardson, E, is among those who attend the after-school program. The facility has classrooms, a library and more.

50 Sunshine Springs students, the last being those 75 who are served once or twice a week.

And though reading remains the priority, math, science and computer skills also are on the agenda, a grant from the University of South Florida's Institute of Black Life provided the program.

About 35 volunteers, including 1215 and Hillsborough Community College students, give one-on-one attention to first- and second-graders. Individual lesson plans are crafted out by the elementary school's reading specialist, Mary Bellamy.

The program is funded largely by the Children's Fund and also gets grants or donations from the United Family Foundation and others.

USF's Kappa Delta society donated \$2,500 last year to buy books in memory of Steven, who died of pancreatic cancer in 2003. Another \$2,000 was given this year.

USF also provides speakers who give tips on health, nutrition and general life skills.

Last week, Devonta Mays, E, pushed his finger into a fire cup of red Jell-O he would never get to eat.

"Go down to there, I've b.

FOR INFORMATION:
 Write an instructor in the program or children at Sunshine Springs program, and call 813-965-1195 or Instructors.

Let it go," volunteer tutor Lorenz Richardson said.

Devonta was learning a fact about the octopus. It's soft body feels much like gelatin.

He and other students look over reading aloud facts about the octopus and use cut paper resources to paste onto bookends.

"Our word for the week is octopus," Johnson said.

In the computer lab, USF student Theresa Sharkey, 21, worked with a student on reading and math skills.

In another classroom, Sergio Pina, 22, also a USF student, helped with reading. He helps also with Spanish-speaking students learning English and serves communication between their parents and program staff.

"What makes it so special is you build a bond," Pina said.

The students receive praise and rewards, including toys and awards, for good behavior and for reading. Purple papers signed by parents prove they finished lesson reading assignments.

Their cut build up reading hours, awarding a light blue or orange-colored track at the end of each month.

Moira Germaine and Jennifer Moustakas, both 25, were among more than 30 students to pay thank-you notes to teachers in July.

"It was kind of them and a learning experience," said Doro and USF student Center Hill, 20. Her friend, 7 is Ryan Hester, is an Army platoon leader in England.

Worley wants to build on the program's growth. She hopes to start 1000 diploma classes in the fall in partnership with HCC.

A grandmothers' support group is in its infancy. Many grandmothers and up to caregivers but don't know where to look for resources, Worley said.

"They can help one another," she said.

Last week, Worley talks about creating her own building. That is by the Lord's hands, she said. "I'm working toward that goal."

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