

Summer Camp promotes learning through elders

By LUCI WELDON
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Living history was the theme on Aug. 8 as children participating in Warren County Training School/North Warren High School (WCTS/NWHS) and Friends Alumni Association's Summer Academic Enrichment Camp had the opportunity to interview alumni.

The academic enrichment camp, sponsored by the alumni association in collaboration with Rural School and Community Trust, is designed to assist students from Warren County and surrounding areas who have academic skills deficiencies in math, reading and writing, said Frank Hendrick, program director.

While the children in grades one through five work on their academic skills, they are also learning about community history.

"We have introduced an oral history component to provide students with an opportunity to engage in activities and exercises about the history of Warren County Training School and North Warren High School,"

Hendrick said. "We felt that one of the most valuable ways to do that is to provide community resources through alumni who graduated from this school."

As a result, about a dozen alumni, some of whom graduated in the 1930s, returned to their alma mater to discuss their experiences.

"The alumni (who participated) are a diverse group: a Korean War veteran, several in their late 80s, and Mr. Cheek's (the school's first principal) son," Hendrick said. "Some went on to teach here."

With the number of alumni participating, the interview sessions were held over the course of two days, so students had more than one opportunity to practice their communication skills.

For the interviews, students divided into small groups and took turns asking questions. In addition to completing question forms as they listened, they used tape recording technology to make sure they didn't miss any important details.

However, the interviews weren't just a fun way to learn about community history.

"The exciting part is that oral history is not separate from (the academic focus); it is an integral part of the academic side," Hendrick said. "Teachers can formulate math exercises (based on the oral history experience)."

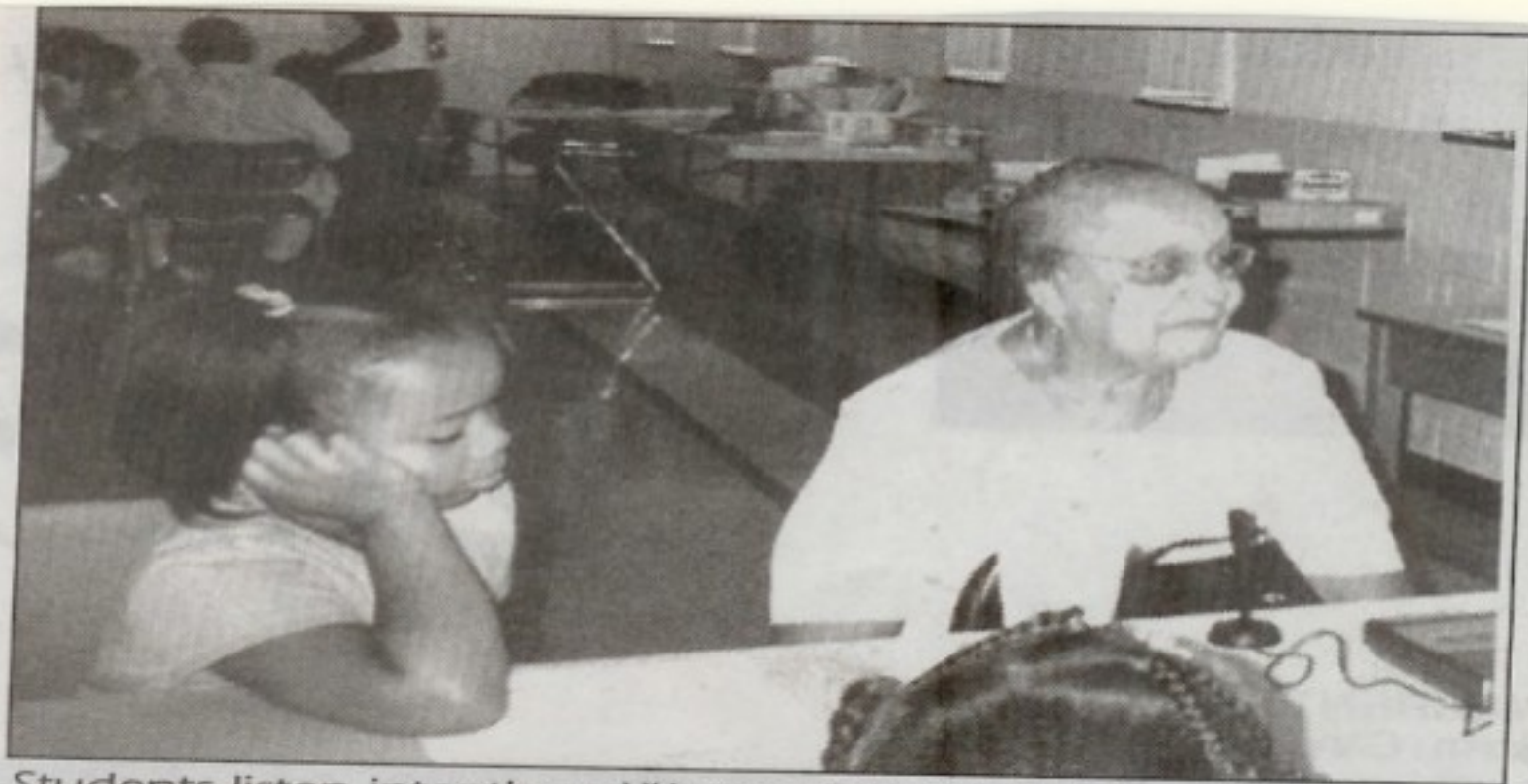
In addition, the interviews provided students with an opportunity to practice their writing skills.

"The students did the interviews and as a result, they use the information and will engage in writing short stories formulated from the interviews with the alumni," Hendrick said.

As a part of the academic enrichment camp's focus on local history, the students also developed a timeline of school, community, state and national history.

The history exercises provide a good example of the types of learning activities that are typical during the academic enrichment camp, now in its second year.

"This year, enrollment is 52 with an average attendance of 37," Hendrick said. "We have a certified teacher for each grade



Students listen intently as Warren County Training School graduate Mattie B. Hawkins, center, recalls memories of the school and its place in the community.

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level, one through five. There is a qualified teacher assistant for each grade level, and volunteers also help with the program."

Hendrick believes that the 2007 program has been a great success.

"It is going very well," he said during the program.

After two weeks of academic enrichment camp, the young participants might jump into the new school year with the attitude that learning is fun. And that would bring a smile to the face of everyone involved with the summer program.