

Parents looking to help students

Parent Leadership Institute program aids schools with strapped resources, budgets

By KEVIN HOWELL, Staff Writer

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The Parent Leadership Institute graduation ceremony was held Saturday afternoon at Das Dutch Village Inn. The program is sponsored by Parents for Public Schools of Greater Cincinnati through the Family and Community Resource Center (FCRC) of Columbiana County and the Columbiana County Educational Service Center (ESC). Six parents from Columbiana County graduated from the program. Pictured, (front, from left) Cindy Slavens, founder and executive director of the FCRC; Amy Kataro of United; Jamie Meredith of Crestview; Talicia McNealy, manager at Ohio Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC); (back, from left) Rolonda Smith, executive director of Parents for Public Schools of Greater Cincinnati; Stacey Stoudt of United; Kristen Miller of Crestview; Denise Marcelt of Beaver Local; and Lorie Bush of United. (Salem News photo by Kevin Howell)

COLUMBIANA- With many public schools in the area facing deficit in the near future, administrations are looking for every advantage to increase test scores while avoiding added strain to an already strapped budget.

Some parents in Columbiana County are planning to do everything they can to make their task easier.

Six parents from United, Crestview and Beaver local school districts graduated from the Parent Leadership Institute at a ceremony Saturday afternoon at Das Dutch Village Inn. The program was sponsored by Parents for Public Schools of Greater Cincinnati through the Family and Community Resource Center (FCRC) of Columbiana County and the Columbiana County Educational Service Center (ESC).

In total, 20 parents from Columbiana, Mahoning and Cuyahoga counties participated in the program, which helps parents establish a project with measurable goals and objectives to improve student achievement by engaging parents and guardians in the process of life-long learning.

The event culminates six days of training over almost three months. It is the first time the program has been offered in this area.

"Schools are going to have to come up with creative ways to increase test scores and engage parents, and this program will help them out," said Cindy Slavens, founder and executive director of the FCRC. "Data shows that greater interaction is reflective in scores."

Each parent who graduates from the program receives \$250 to go toward their projects, but some of the parents, two from Crestview and three from United, are pooling their money together, Slavens noted.

The schools recognize the potential the leadership training offers district residents, too.

"One of the parts of our mission [at Crestview] is that the school is the heart of the community, so having parents involved is a big part of following that mission," said Crestview schools Superintendent John Dilling. "Just getting the parents involved will be a big thing for us."

For the parents, though, the children are what matter most.

"I want to be a part of my children's education and help our schools succeed," said Lorie Bush, a mother at United. "We are receiving really good tools to help us involve parents and establish a relationship with school administration."

Bush is working with the other parents from United to increase junior high students' interest in social studies through a history fair.

The Parent Leadership Institute will be offered again next year, Slavens said. Anyone interested in participating may call the FCRC at 330-337-6772.

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