



1991



Motorcade path will target route criminals take

By Shrona Foreman
News Journal

It's a drive against destruction. And a local youth group is in need of a few good cars.

The Motorcade Against Drugs, sponsored by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, will begin at 10 a.m. next Saturday.

The motorcade will start at the Cordova Mall Cinemas parking lot on Bayou Boulevard and end at the Judicial Center on Government Street.

Along the way, stops will be made at the Escambia County Jail, the Pensacola Police Department and the courthouse.

"We want to show kids the route they will go if they choose to become involved in drugs and gang violence," said Leroy Williams, association president.

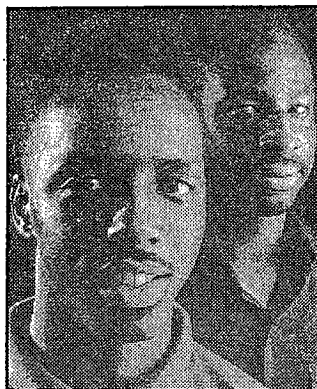
For the past two years, the group sponsored anti-drug marches that began at the courthouse and ended at the police station.

"We wanted to do something that would be a little more visible," said Brian Guest, the group's vice president.

Organizers also hope that a motorcade will attract people who balked at the 2-mile trek from the courthouse to the police department.

"We want to give people a chance to take a stand against drugs while in the comfort of their own vehicles," Guest said.

The group's goal is to unify the community and give



Leroy Williams, left, and Brian Guest are organizing the motorcade against drugs.

Motorcade to take criminals' path

FROM 1B




"people a feeling of common interest," Guest added.



"We don't want people to just sit back and watch (the motorcade). We want them to get involved — to join us," Williams said.

Motorists are encouraged to decorate their vehicles with posters that feature anti-drug messages.

The non-profit group sponsors a variety of activities for area youth, including retreats, educational workshops, talent competitions, sporting events and dramatic presentations.

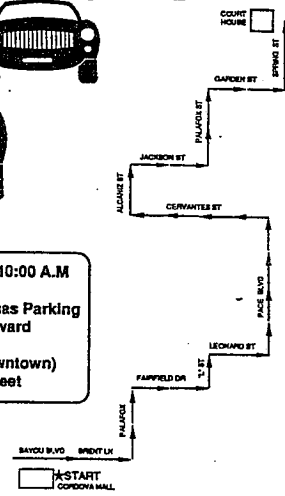
The group raises money through car washes, dinner sales, talent shows, gospel music concerts and T-shirt sales.

Join In 
and Take 
a Stand... 



MOTORCADE AGAINST DRUGS

Saturday, August 10, 1991 at 10:00 A.M.
Start: Cordova Mall Cinemas Parking Lot on Bayou Boulevard
Ends: Judicial Center (Downtown) 190 Government Street



Express Your Feelings...
Decorate Your Car with Anti-Drug Slogans

Sponsored by 

For More Information Call: 444-0646 or 444-0877

Group takes the wheel in fight against drugs

By Nicole Lacey
News Journal

Instead of marching, residents relayed a positive message in comfort Saturday morning — they took a stand against drugs while driving in their cars.

About 20 decorated vehicles participated in The Motorcade Against Drugs sponsored by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.

For the past two years, the group sponsored anti-drug marches that began at the courthouse and ended at the police station.

But some people balked at the two-mile trek, and organizers decided to try something different.

"We are trying to demonstrate the importance of coming together and support each other in fighting drugs and gang violence," said Leroy Williams, association president.

The one-hour motorcade began with an opening ceremony with prayer and singing in the Cordova Mall Cinemas parking lot on Bayou Boulevard.

"We thank God for this motorcade in our community," said the Rev. Robert Likely, pastor of

Second Mount Carmel Baptist Church. "We thank God for the attitudes of these men and women."

The Vietnam Veterans Association of Northwest Florida also participated in the motorcade by displaying flags and posters that said "Say No To Drugs."

"We support anything against drugs... Anything will help if it keeps one child to go straight," veteran Bill Corbin said.

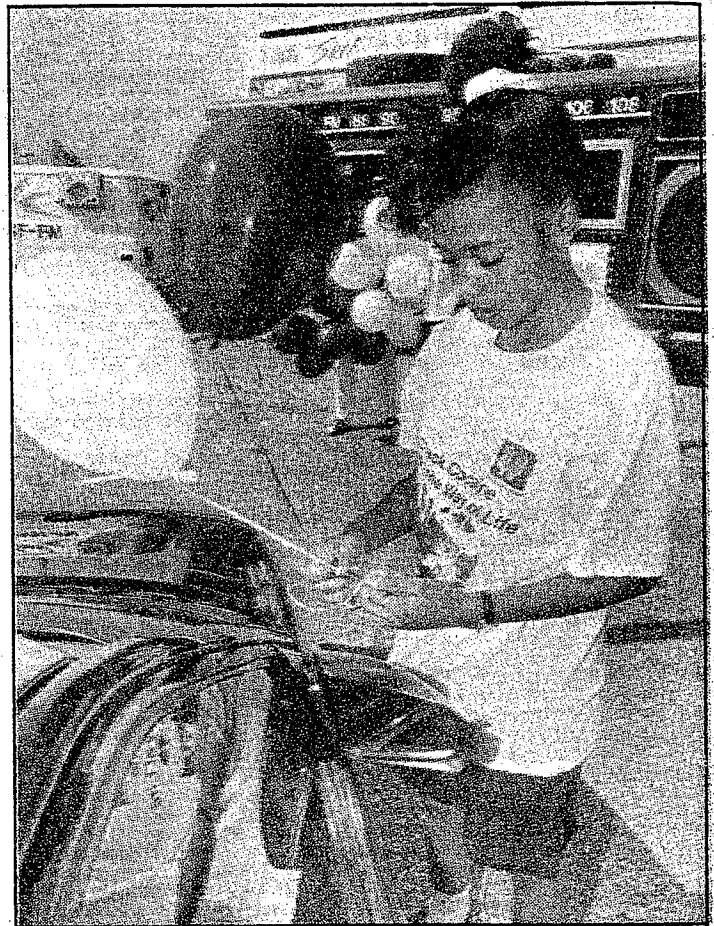
Sheriff Charlie Johnson applauded the efforts of the group as the event ended on the steps of the Judicial Center on Government Street.

"Your heart is in the right place. Remember there is no way law enforcement can do it all. We've got a long way to go," Johnson said.

Williams hoped for a better turnout, but the group won't stop its effort to eliminate drug abuse in the community.

The non-profit group sponsors activities for area youth including retreats, educational workshops, sporting events and dramatic presentations.

The group raises money through car washes, dinner sales, talent shows, gospel music concerts and T-shirt sales.



Jerry Kovach/News Journal

Melinda Lee, 15, decorates a car with balloons Saturday before The Motorcade Against Drugs sponsored by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.

At-risk youths are reminded they call the shots

Messages on drugs, AIDS mixed with a little fun

By David Tortorano
News Journal

The group in the room was varied: a 5-year-old boy, girls in their early teens and youths on the verge of adulthood.

They were there for a message. "When you got a message that you want to bring the kids, you have to bring it in a way that you can get their attention," said Leroy Williams, president of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.

Williams was on hand Saturday for the second association-sponsored recreation retreat for 40 youths from drug-plagued areas. The retreat, conducted at the Human Relations Commission Building at 29 S. Spring St., included workshops on drugs, teen-age pregnancy and AIDS,

and recreation like a doughnut-eating and talent contest.

It's designed to let them have fun but get a message as well.

The first workshop was conducted by Dana Carroll-Fields, a Girl Scout leader who talked about growing up among problems. A young person has "the ability and the power to overcome any obstacles in your life."

She used the analogy of a seed in the ground and asked them what would happen if a rock were in a place where the plant would sprout. The kids agreed the stem would grow around the rock.

If a seed has that determination, so can people, she said.

"How the seed first starts out determines how it's going to grow," she said. "I'm not here to tell you what to do or what not to do. But what I am here to say is

that you have the power of choice."

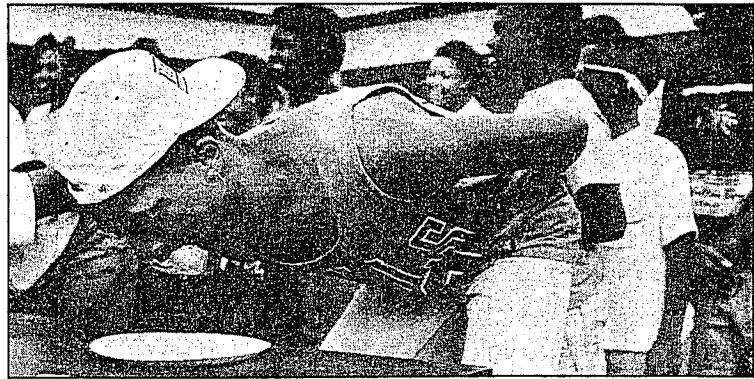
Adults would say kids face the problems of drugs, peer pressure, pregnancy and suicide. But the problems stem from how an individual makes choices, she said.

Kids attend the retreat because they can have a good time doing what they want to do — singing, dancing, acting, modeling and other activities, Williams said.

"And once we get them to come in the door, they like staying. They like what they see. They go out and tell their friends, and their friends come in . . . it just keeps multiplying."

Williams recognized a third of the kids as repeats from last year.

The association plans other events besides the retreat. Events include plays, a variety show and gospel. They also plan to visit the jail and courthouse.



John Blackie/News Journal
Sylvester Ishmael, 18, participates in the no-hands doughnut-eating competition at a workshop for young people from drug-plagued neighborhoods Saturday in downtown Pensacola. Information and advice on drugs, teen-age pregnancy and AIDS were provided.

A good example says it all

Young men help steer kids away from drugs by being role models

By Joey Bunch
News Journal

On this day before boxing practice, Leroy Williams wears a purple-and-gold basketball jersey with number 32 and "Magic" on the back.

It fits, in more ways than one. The jersey is like the one worn by sports hero Magic Johnson of the Los Angeles Lakers. Williams is a hero to a lot of Pensacola kids. He's No. 1 in their hearts. His team is the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association and every kid on the team is the most valuable player. But it's not his words but his friendship that's magic.

Williams, president of PCARA, and vice presidents Brian Guest and Julius Benson meet with about 40 kids twice a week at the Human Relations Commission auditorium on South Spring Street. Some box. Some dance. Some practice for plays. They all support each other.

Each of the leaders carry beepers in case any of the kids needs someone to talk to. They talk to Williams, Guest and Benson about everything from drugs and suicide to good movies and basketball.

Shederick Blackmon, a 13-year-old student at Sidney Neelson Middle/High School, never misses boxing practice. Blackmon is 6-foot-2 and 210 pounds so Williams, who was invited to box in the 1984 Olympic Festival, is the only one who goes rounds with the powerful puncher.

Before he came to Williams, Blackmon was losing interest in the sport. Another public gym was using him as little more than a punching bag for more experienced fighters. Admiration bubbles in his voice when he talks about Williams.

"Leroy doesn't talk at you a lot — he doesn't ever preach or talk rough," Blackmon says. "If you let your gloves down, though, he'll let you know about it. He says in different ways that drugs will mess your life up. If you mess with drugs, you ain't ever going to be anything."

Besides regular meetings, the group holds swim parties and softball games and visits nursing homes, children's hospital and jails.

About one night a month, they pack into the cars of as many drivers as Williams can round up. They go to a movie, a ballgame or to the mall — "whatever the kids want to do," Williams says.

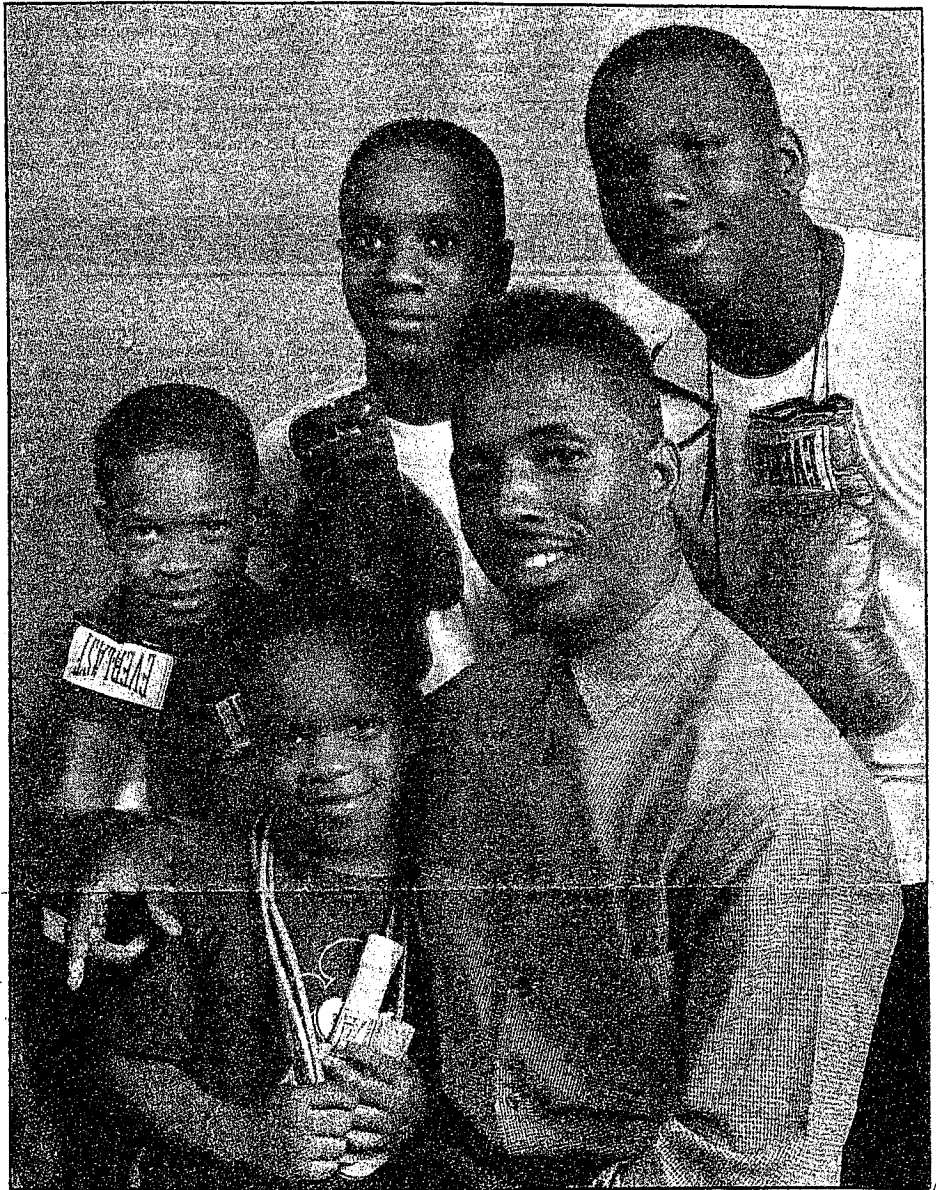
This spring, the association's kids went to New Orleans after Williams negotiated a deal with Greyhound. The kids, some who had never been out of Pensacola, saw museums, a zoo and The French Quarter.

Saturday, PCARA will stage a Motorcade Against Drugs, beginning at 10 a.m. at Cordova Cinema parking lot near Cordova Mall. Anyone can display an anti-drug poster and join in the drive around town.

"We approach things as, 'We'll show you what you don't need to have a good time,'" Williams says. "Drugs are a way not to have fun."

Williams, 27, started a boxing club in 1984 to give kids a place to get away from the violence he had seen

See PCARA, back of section



Dean Saito/News Journal

Leroy Williams, seated, poses with a few of the kids that gathered for boxing practice, clockwise, Rofael Watts, Rhanji Jacobs, Rayfael Watts and Shederick Blackmon.

PCARA gives kids a place away from troubles

FROM PAGE 1

growing near Belmont and Deviliers streets.

"I was one of those most likely not to succeed coming from the area I was from, coming from a family that was hurt by a lot of drugs and killing and shooting," he says.

In 1983, his father died after he was hit in the head with a hammer in a dispute with an employee. Leroy Williams said the shock killed his mother three days later. A few months earlier, Williams' best friend since childhood was stabbed to death with a broken bottle outside a nightclub on Belmont Street.

Williams overcame the personal tragedies. He earned a vocational degree at Pensacola Junior College, where he was the president of the Black Student Union and president pro temp of the Student Government Association. He has well-paying job as a fiberglass mechanic at the Naval Aviation Depot.

"Seeing through all that violence and death really pierced my heart," Williams says. "I said, 'Hey Leroy, you were fortunate, you're making something out of yourself.' My father always told me to be a leader, not a follower. There are a lot of kids who weren't as lucky and wanted help. I wanted to help them. I said to myself, 'What can I do?'"

Williams went to city leaders and told them what he wanted to do. They told him his focus was too narrow; he needed to offer more than boxing.

Williams was determined. He wrote a play for his boxers, "Crack Cocaine: Not the Way of Life."

He asked for help from Guest, a close friend when they were students at PJC. Guest had been studying accounting at Florida A & M University in Tallahassee.

Guest, 25, could teach karate and kick boxing and had also done some modeling for local stores.

About a year later, Benson, a 27-year-old professional dancer and model, became second vice

president.

In 1988, PCARA passed its bylaws and received non-profit tax status.

The three leaders dress up and go out on weekends to invite kids to the activities. They try to show kids Benson



Benson

in a gang to be cool. "Role models are very important," Williams says. "We go out on the weekend, dress nice — I just got a new car that kids like — and just be their friend."

"Most of the time kids see the guys selling drugs, wearing all the gold, in the fancy cars, with a big knot of money and all the ladies — they're drug ladies, but the kids don't know what that means. Kids are looking to these guys as role models, and that's the problem."

Williams hears about the shootings. He hears children's worries about the violence, the drugs, the deaths of their friends.

He hears a lot of adults doing a lot of talking about the problems.

"We have a lot of people talking about what could be done, or what should be done about the kids, but they're not talking about what we are going to do," he says. "Nobody talks to the kids until it's too late."

Williams said that PCARA helps kids help themselves. PCARA teaches kids self-respect. "Me or the police or their mama ain't going to be standing there

when somebody offers them a hit of crack," he says.

The group has to help itself.

PCARA puts on Williams' plays — "Crack Cocaine: Not the Way of Life" and "Drugs — You Make the Decision" — for civic groups, churches and Guest schools for any donation they can get. They hold car washes, dinner sales, bake sales and T-shirt sales.

Praise doesn't stick to Williams. Tell him he does a great job, and he'll tell you about his great vice presidents. Tell him he's doing great things for a kid, and he'll tell you that's a great kid.

"We've got a lot of people patting us on the back telling us what a great job we're doing," he says. "People say, 'If you need anything, just let me know,' but then when you go see them, all you get are these stories about why they can't help."

"It doesn't take much. I won't let money be a factor when it comes to helping any kid that wants help. I'll take it out of my own pocket."

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Charlie Jacobs is offering more than moral support. He is starting a business, A Touch of Color, to sell T-shirts that change color with heat. He said 10 percent of the profits will go to PCARA.

Jacobs takes his son, Rhanji, PCARA's events.

"These fellows are role models," Jacobs said.



pay people, especially businesses, to get behind them. You wouldn't believe how kids look up to them."

Williams said the biggest need is a van to take kids on field trips and, more importantly, to bring them to the meetings and events.

"There's a lot of kids that would come, but their parents won't bring them," Williams says.

"If we had transportation, you couldn't count the kids that would be down here. Once they come in the door, they're here all the time."

"A lot of people might say, 'Hey, that's a black organization.' No. I tell our minority kids to go out and bring in a majority kid. You can't let color be a barrier; that's stupid thinking."

"Everyone here is accepted by their peers in a clean environment, and that's getting harder to find."

For more information about PCARA, call Williams at 444-0646, Guest at 444-0677 or Benson at 435-4367. PCARA's address 6137 Pam Ave., Pensacola 32526. Donations are tax-deductible.



1990





Bruce Graner/News Journal

Leroy Williams, left, and Brian Guest started a self-help group for youths.



Founders of youth group teach success

This is the first of four stories saluting Pensacola News Journal Heroes.

Carnegie honors 16 heroes/8A

By Beth Ramirez
News Journal

Brian Guest and Leroy Williams are no "caped crusaders."

They don't wear colorful uniforms. No one asks for their autographs. They look like two ordinary young men — except for the determination that burns inside them.

That determination makes them heroes in the eyes of the young Pensacoli-

ans who look up to them because of their work at the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, a youth group they founded two years ago.

Guest, 24, and Williams, 27, who became friends while attending Pensacola Junior College, strive to instill their goal-oriented behaviors in black teen-agers who, like themselves, will face an uphill battle to make something of themselves.

Each has earned a well-paid job, an improved education and prospects for a bright future. They hope to give others the same kind of push toward success

by providing activities that help teens develop their talents instead of getting sidetracked by drug use, teen-age pregnancy or criminal mischief, they said.

Their strategy seems to be working. Antonio Murphy, 18, and Mario Goram, 16, are group members who say Guest and Williams have helped them by being positive role models.

"They have taken a lot of stress off me," said Murphy. "I feel comfortable with them, like I can discuss my problems with them. Leroy is really like a brother to me."

"They keep me out of trouble and give

See GUEST, back of section

N STATE, ALABAMA, UNCC PLAYERS IN TOWN FOR BLUE ANGELS CLASSIC TOURNAMENT, 1C

Guest, Williams finance youth group's activities

FROM 1A

us things to do besides fighting and getting into trouble," Goram said. "They care."

Guest is single and a native Pensacolian. He is a son of Edward and Isabella Guest and has four sisters. In his early teens, Guest began working odd jobs and always felt he could be successful. He graduated from Pine Forest High School in 1984 and earned an associate of arts degree in accounting from PJC in 1986. He started with Gulf Power Co. in 1983 in a student training program and now works full-time in employee benefits.

Guest was recommended by company executive Dusty Fisher as a "Pensacola Hero" for "spending countless hours ... making our community a better place to live."

Guest attended Florida A&M University and is continuing his education at the University of West Florida, where he is majoring in accounting. He credits his family and others with his success.

"People were there for me. My parents, fortunately, stressed education. I spent nine years playing ball with the Salvation Army and I learned how to get along well with everybody," he said.

Funding for the group's activities — including retreats, talent competitions, sporting events and dramatic presentations — comes from Guest's and Williams' own pockets, and from contributions Guest gets from local small businesses, he said.

The group, which has more than

40 members, meets in the offices of the Escambia-Pensacola Human Relations Commission.

"Our goal is to affect as many kids as possible ... If you can remove someone from a (poor) environment, you can reinforce some type of drive," Guest said. "I hope I can give kids a sense of responsibility, determination and self-confidence, because with that they can be successful."

Williams, who was raised by his grandmother, said his early years were violent ones.

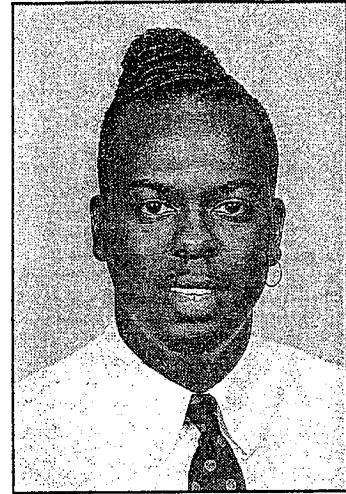
"I was determined to get out of the situation I was in and make something of myself. I tell these kids, you can still make something of yourself, you don't have to be a failure."

Williams started working for himself at 14, when he created a paper route by servicing homes in Morris and Attucks Courts, where other carriers would not go, he said. A customer, impressed with his hard work and determination, helped him buy a used Moped so he could expand his delivery route.

After four years, Williams won a summer job over 50 other applicants in the tool room at Pensacola Naval Air Station. His go-getter attitude impressed people and moved him up in the ranks. Williams is now a Fiberglass mechanic at the top of his pay grade. He has a degree from PJC, where he served as an Student Government Association officer and led the Black Students' Union.

He and his wife, Trenesha, have two sons: Jason, 9, and Antoine, 4. The couple also has an adopted daughter, Sharon McAllister, 11.

SNAPSHOT



JULIUS "BEMP" BENSON

Job: He works with the Wayne Dalton Corporation.

Family: Single.

Club activities: He is the second vice president of Pensacola Community Arts Recreation Association. He has been with the organization for three years. "We provide alternatives for kids like acting, dancing, modeling, volleyball, basketball and other sports. We really try to keep them off drugs and talk to them about teen pregnancy and peer pressure. We want to help solve the major drug problems in our community."

My hometown is: Pensacola.

I most admire: "People who are self-motivating and who have career goals."

The best advice my parents ever gave me was: "Be yourself and don't ever forget where you came from."

If I won the lottery, I'd: "Well, I would give some of it to charity. There are so many charities that I would give to, like Black My Own and other organizations. Then I would give to my family."

If I could change anything I would: "Improve the job opportunities for black Americans. I would make it so that more black Americans provide for themselves."

My favorite sports: "I like all sports, but I guess basketball and baseball would be my two favorites. I participate more in basketball. I like to watch football."

My favorite music: "I like it all really, but I prefer R&B, jazz and rap."

My favorite food is: Seafood.

My hobbies are: The club takes up most of my time, other than that I am a choreographer for my friend's (Marcel St. Clair) stage show.

Pet peeves: "People who are late."

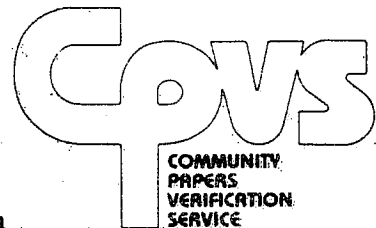
August 9 - August 15, 1990

PCARA to Hold March Against Drugs

The Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association (PCARA) is sponsoring a march against drugs, and would like for all concerned citizens to join in and take a stand on what they describe as "the major problems of drugs" in the community; The march will take place Sunday, August 26,

1990 at 4:00pm. The march will start from the Judicial Center, 190 Government St., and will end at the Pensacola Police Department, 711 North Haynes Street. "Now is the time for all of us to come together before it is too late." PCARA urges, "Please help us help our children and save our com-

munity." For more information call Leroy Williams or Brian Guest at (904)444-0677.



'Memories of Yesterday' influences kids' tomorrow

By Mike Suchcicki
News Journal

There's a message to be found in memories. And the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association will reveal that message Sunday in a program of skits and music.

"Memories of Yesterday" will be presented at 2:30 p.m. Sunday in the Pensacola High School Auditorium, 500 W. Maxwell St. Admission is free.

The program, which is co-sponsored by the gospel chorus K.T. & the Gospel Revelators and the Escambia-Pensacola Human Relations Commission, will feature a skit, "In the Morning," followed by a play, "A Sunday Morning in the South." Both the skit and the play will be presented by members of the PCARA, with background music by the Revelators.

The 60-voice Revelators chorus will perform a set of songs after the play.

Then, the show will present Fred Berry and his On Time ministry. Berry, an actor-turned-minister, is best known for his role as Rerun on the television series "What's Hap-

pening" and "What's Happening Now."

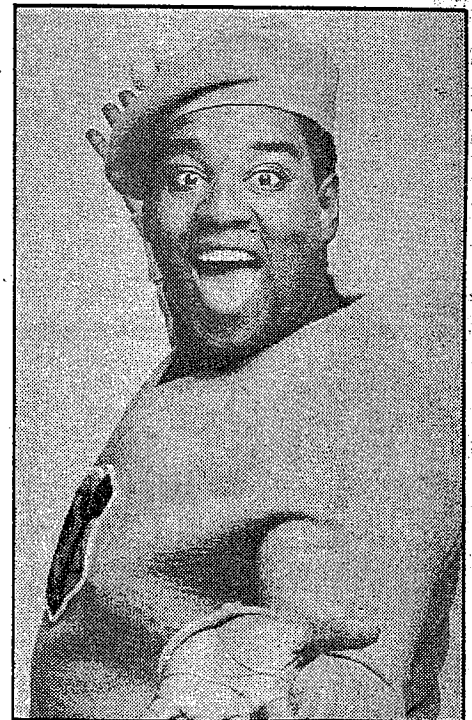
"We're trying to have something nice for people who don't get out much because they really don't have the money for it," says Leroy Williams, president and founder of the PCARA.

The focus of the program is on black history, in observance of Black History Month, Williams says. But much of the show involves messages concerning drugs, teen-age pregnancy and teen suicide, he says.

"It's a reflection of where we've come from and where we still have to go," says Michael Thomas, president of K.T. & the Gospel Revelators.

The PCARA is an arts-based group with an anti-drug mission, Williams says. About 45 youngsters from throughout the county participate in the organization, which uses acting, singing, dancing, modeling, aerobics and other activities to present alternative and positive lifestyles for youth.

For more information about the show, call 444-0646, 444-0677 or 434-1441.



Fred Berry, an actor-turned-minister, will be a part of Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's "Memories of Yesterday" program Sunday.

Author hopes play will enlighten youngsters to the dangers of drugs

By Troy Moon
News Journal

There will be crack cocaine, guns, drug dealers, prostitutes and a stabbing at the Knights of Columbus hall Sunday afternoon.

And though it's all part of the make-believe world of theater, the 16 actors involved know that what happens on the stage, happens on the streets every day.

The play "Crack Cocaine Is Not The Way Of Life" will be presented by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association at 3 p.m. Sunday.

"You could hear bullets whistling by you on the streets," said 29-year-old Douglas Shine about the year he spent living in Truman Arms Apartments two years ago. "When I was living there, crack wasn't quite as big as it is now. But it was there. And sometimes you'd hear gunshots. That's why they called it Saigon."

"Crack Cocaine Is Not The Way Of Life" is the brainchild of 25-year-old Leroy Williams who wrote the play. Williams, who is a civilian fiberglass mechanic at Pensacola Naval Air Station, said he hopes the play will enlighten people to the dangers of drugs. Especially youngsters.

"Our youth are being weakened by drugs," Williams said. "Someone had to say something. Someone had to give a positive message. That's what this play is about."

What the play really is about is a young man named Doo-Doo, played by 13-year-old Brian Curry, who gets involved with crack and eventually is killed

'CRACK COCAINE IS NOT THE WAY OF LIFE'

WHAT: A play, presented by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association
WHEN: 3 p.m. Sunday
WHERE: Knights of Columbus hall, 519 N. Palafox St.
ADMISSION: \$3
DETAILS: 432-5875

in drug-related violence. Williams plays the killer B.T., who works for the main crack supplier, Daddy Longhead, played by 22-year-old Brian Guest. "I've seen drugs. I've had to live with drugs before," Guest said, referring to former roommates who were mixed up with crack dealers. "It's a shame, you can't even go out on the streets hardly without seeing a drug deal going down."

Guest knows times weren't always so vicious. "It used to be when you and I were young, kids used to play ball in the streets, just having fun," he said. "Now you don't ever see kids playing in the streets, just throwing the ball around."

Scott Curry, 13, who plays Frankie, Daddy Longhead's bodyguard, said drugs in his Wedgewood neighborhood have gotten worse over the last few years. "Sometimes it gets so bad, the police come in vans making busts," Curry said.



Bruce Graner/News Journal

Drug dealer B.T., played by Leroy Williams, threatens the young "crack head" Doo-Doo, played by Brian Curry, with a knife in a scene from "Crack Cocaine is Not the Way of Life."



Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association

1989 thru 1987



Organizer hopes today's march steers youths off road to drugs

By Jeff Houck
News Journal

When anti-drug crusader Leroy Williams leads an anti-drug march today through downtown Pensacola, he'll think about how alcohol ruined his parents lives.

He'll also remember the help-less feeling he had while experi-menting briefly with mari-juana.

But Williams, 25, also will think of things his Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association can do to show that drugs are a one-way road to nowhere.

"I'm constantly trying to think of interesting ways to get the message across," said Williams, a Pensacola native and father of three. "Even when I'm at work, I'll be thinking of ideas so that whenever I get a break, I can go jot them down."

Today's march, which begins at 3 p.m. and known as The March Against Drugs, will start at the Escambia County Judicial Center and will finish at the Pensacola Police Department.

To convince people to listen, Williams says he believes you have to entice them with something that interests them.

"We have enough outreach programs already, but they don't offer what the kids want," said Williams, who is a fiberglass worker at Pensacola Naval Air Station.



"Most programs are stationary and require people to come to them for help," he said. "But PCARA goes to the people and does what the people want to do."

Williams said he noticed that young men like to fight. That prompted him to start battling drugs five years ago by organizing boxing clinics in local parks.

"If you offer them something like boxing, you can take them in and teach them about self-discipline and how to properly live their lives," he said. "Boxing isn't only about self-defense."

He began writing anti-drug plays two years ago after a starring in a local production "A Raisin in the Sun." It was then he noticed the effect drama has on the audience.

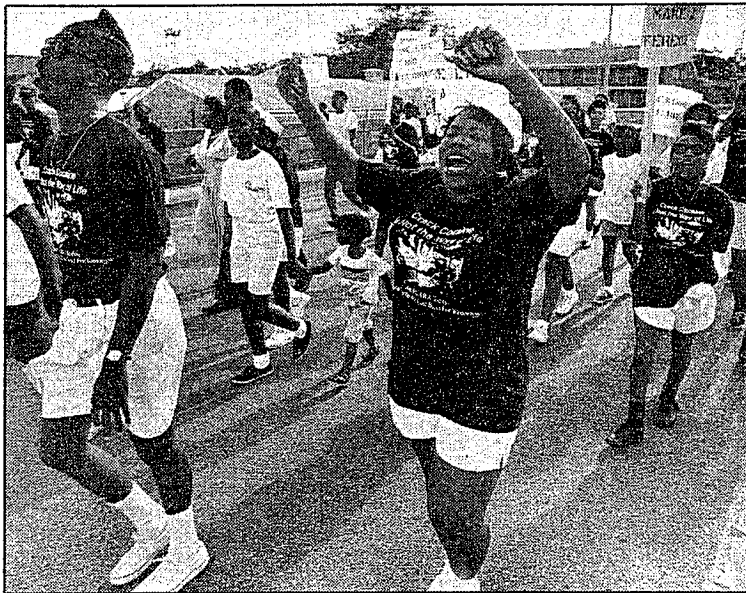
"Plays leave a big impression on people," he said. "They deal with reality and they're something they can see live rather than on TV. A message makes a bigger impression when it's given in person."

Williams started PCARA six months ago with only 12 members. The non-profit organization now has 42.

His latest idea to present his message is today's march.

And although the participants will march through predominantly black neighborhoods, he isn't targeting the black community alone.

"I don't like it when people say drugs are a black problem or a white problem in this country, he said. "They're an American problem and we all need to realize this before we can beat it."



John Blackie/News Journal

Venus Dortch of Pensacola, with arms outstretched, leads marchers Sunday in a song against drugs.

Activists march downtown in uphill battle of drug war

By Allison Smith
News Journal

About 50 people who participated in a downtown march Sunday are hoping to win the war against drugs in the community.

But right now, they don't think they are winning.

Ernest "Squirrel" George, 17, of Escambia High School, said some of his neighbors in frequent drug-induced stupors make little sense when trying to make conversation.

Shameka Carson, 15, of Escambia High, said she's seen a mother beat her child while on drugs, and that woman is now in the Escambia County Jail.

"Drugs are beginning to destroy our community," said Mark Anthony Cleveland, who was master of ceremonies in the second annual March Against Drugs, sponsored by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.

Association members contacted drug-treatment agencies and more than 100

churches for support in Sunday's march. However, the 30 group members and their families and friends were the only ones who participated in two-mile trek from the Judicial Center to the Pensacola Police Department on North Hayne Street.

"We aren't discouraged (by the number of participants)," said LeRoy Williams, president of the association, who added that the march gave people a chance to send a message to the community.

Members wore black T-shirts that said "Crack Cocaine is Not the Way of Life" and carried signs expressing their concerns about drugs.

During the march, they chanted such lines as "We live for hope and not for dope," and "We are here to say that drugs are not the way."

The association is a non-profit organization made up of students, ages 9 through 18, who try to solve some of the problems in the community, including drugs, teen-age pregnancy and suicide. They also work to improve the educational and social environment of their peers.

Anti-drug activists to march today

By Tony Welch
News Journal

Only 50 people participated last year in a march to protest illegal drugs. The number was far fewer than march organizer Leroy Williams had hoped for.

Though the march initially was considered



a disappointment, it was one of the most popular events for the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, said Williams, the group's founder and president.

Today, the group launches its second annual March Against Drugs. "It was one of our strongest weapons last year. Everybody saw how dedicated we were," Williams said.

The first march kicked off in 97-degree heat, which contributed to the low turnout, Williams said. But no matter how hot the temperature, the march is needed, he said.

More people are expected to make the two-mile trek this year, including 30 to 40 association workers. The group used fliers and sought support from area businesses, clubs and churches, Williams said.

The march begins at 4 p.m. at the Escambia County Judicial Center. The group will walk to the Pensacola Police Department.

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Tony Welch/News Journal

Anti-drug marchers approach the top of a hill on Palafox Street on Sunday as they make their way to the Pensacola Police Department. About 50 people made the two-mile trek from the Escambia County Judicial Center to the department in 97-degree heat. The march was sponsored by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.

Marchers walk to fight drugs

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ages 2 to 10, said it's never too early for kids to become aware of the dangers of drugs.

"And you're never too old," said the Jordans, residents of Moreno Court Apartments in Pensacola.

Mrs. Jordan, 26, said she spent a few months hooked on crack cocaine until she realized people who were supplying the drug and saying they were her friends were only helping destroy her and her family.

"I said 'No, that's not me.' And it

won't be my kids. I think we'd walk to the moon for them," said Mrs. Jordan, who carried her 4-year-old son, Jerrald.

Sandy Dibella, 28, said she had experienced several types of drugs, from cocaine to marijuana. "But I didn't have anybody like that," she said, pointing to the march leaders chanting, "Together we can win."

City Councilman Mike DeSorbo, who also made the trek, said he was encouraged by Sunday's showing against drugs. "This is

how it gets started," said DeSorbo, referring to the small crowd. DeSorbo and Escambia County Human Relations Commission Director Eugene Brown, cut ribbon to begin the march.

"Everything starts slow," said Brown. "He (Williams) has to stick with it."

Williams said the next step for PCARA is a repeat performance of his play "Crack Cocaine Is Not The Way Of Life" probably to be performed in late September.

PCARA Presents Play

The Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association members are presenting a play entitled "Crack Cocaine is not the Way of Life," as a part of their continuing effort to combat drug use.

The play is scheduled to be presented at the Knights of Columbus Hall on June 25th at 3 p.m.

LeRoy Williams the groups coordinator, speaking at a Monday rehearsal said, "Most of today's youth are being weakened in our society by the intake of drugs and alcohol.

Something must be done about this major problem," Williams stated.

PCARA is taking a stand on this issue in hopes that it might help solve the major problems of drugs in our community by presenting a play depicting the pitfalls of drug use and the dangers of the lifestyle.

Cast members include LeRoy Williams, Brian Guest, Daphne McClain, Donna Dortch, Katrinia Porter, Chandra Thames, Mickle Porter, Geraldine Sanders, Doug Shine, Ernest George, Eldrick Conners, Bryan Curry and

Tammie Conners.

Also on the program will be Pensacola recording artist Sister Mary Smiley Baldwin and The Smiley Offsprings.

The Smiley Offsprings will perform a skit called King Herion and Sister Mary Smiley Baldwin and the group will sing the title song from their new album, The Invitation To Life.

Williams expressed a desire to have the entire community see this play in hopes that we will see the effects of drug use.

Admission for the performance will be \$3.00.



PCARA rehearses the funeral scene.