



1996





TODAY'S KWANZAA PRINCIPLE

KUUMBA (koo-OOH-bah)
The sixth principle of Kwanzaa meaning "Creativity."

To do always as much as we can, in the way that we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it.

Leroy Williams' creative ways help kids and the community

By Rick Sherrell
News Journal staff writer

For nine years, Leroy Williams and the two other co-founders of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association (PCARA) have spent their time and money finding creative ways to address the problems of a community.

"We want to work with our kids," said Leroy Williams, president of the non-profit organization. "We feel that if we can teach our kids of today to be our leaders of tomorrow we'll have left our community a better place."

Those creative ways include exposing as many as 80 kids to rap sessions, guest speakers, kick-boxing, karate, basketball tournaments, acting, singing, modeling, dancing, aerobics and stage productions.

"Once we get them active in the things they're interested in, we have their attention," Williams said. "Then we can get some messages across."

Williams has used his creativity to write five original plays — each designed to address a problem



John Blackie/News Journal photograph

Leroy Williams listens as Veronica Lee sings after a play rehearsal. Williams has written five dramas about problems in the black community.

See CREATIVITY, 3B

Creativity can help the black community

HOW TO CELEBRATE KWANZAA

There are many and varying rituals surrounding Kwanzaa. Families and organizations have adopted the original rituals of celebration and fashioned them to fit their particular needs, but the basic purpose has remained the same: To bring the family and the community closer together through the observance of the Nguzo Saba — the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa.

Each day of the observance is celebrated by reflecting on the principle of the day. Though tradition varies, most families gather to light the day's candle on the kinara and discuss the associated principle.

During the discussion, led by the head of the household, the family members share in turn what that principle means to them.

They decide, individually, what they will do during the coming year to live according to that principle.

On the night of Dec 31, the Karamu (feast) is held. It includes food, music, dance, fellowship and ceremony.

Karamu brings the community together to give thanks to the Creator for their accomplishments during the year.

FROM IB

that plagues the black community. He and a group of young actors from the community are currently rehearsing for their Black History Month production to be presented at Pensacola Junior College on Feb. 1.

PCARA also works to hold a motorcade for a drug and crime-free community twice each year and an annual non-violence rally. The last such rally attracted more than 1,500 members of the community and featured free food, guest speakers, entertainment and vendor displays.

Williams understands that some problems, like drugs, might always exist in his community.

"But if it's a 10 on a scale of one to 10 and we can move it down to a two or three by working with the kids and showing them the right things in life, then by the time they get to be our age our community will be a better place to live," he said.

The group doesn't receive any funding, and Williams and his partners don't get paid for what they do. Aside from occasional sponsors for their events and activities, they use their salaries from full-time jobs to keep the program going.

"Just to help somebody is a great feeling," Williams said. "I'd rather not get paid. I get blessings for what I do. I just appreciate being able to give back."

Funfest, non-violence rally 'brought everyone together'

By Scott Schouler
News Journal staff writer

They were enticed by the free hamburgers, hot dogs and sodas. They laughed and giggled at goofy relay games from balloon tosses to egg-carry relays. But the more than 175 kids who came to the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's sixth annual Funfest on Saturday at Terry Wayne Ball Park West left with a message. It was about doing the right

COMMUNITY

thing. "We've noticed the deaths and the killing. We've noticed the drugs on our streets," said Leroy Williams, association president. "The only way to stop those things is to unite the people and spread the word to our young people." Organizers helped spread the word with workshops and games about staying in school, protect-

ing against AIDS, staying drug-free and avoiding violence. This year, Funfest was combined with the annual United Together for Non-Violence Rally. Shawanna Harker, 13, of Pensacola, said most of the youths,



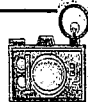
Howard

ages 9 to 15, listened and learned. "I think it brought everyone together," Shawanna said. "There are some that came here just to have fun. But I think there are a lot of kids that came here today that got the message." Laura Allen, 30, brought her



daughter and two nieces all the way from Biloxi, Miss. "There's not enough for kids to do in the summer," Allen said. "Anything to keep the kids off the streets and out of trouble is good." Latoya Howard, 15, of Pensacola said she can't wait to attend next year's festival. "They say black people can't get together without fighting," she said. "All of those people that say that should have been here today. Everybody was getting along and having fun. It was positive."

SNAPSHOT



Know someone to spotlight in a snapshot? Call us at 435-8519



LEROY WILLIAMS

Job: Williams, 32, is president and co-founder of Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, a non-profit youth service organization that aims to prevent school drop-out, drug abuse, and teen pregnancy by involving children in arts and recreation activities. He also is a nylon textile technician at Monsanto.

Education: He is a 1982 Escambia High graduate and has an Associate of Sciences degree from Pensacola Junior College and is working on a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of West Florida.

Honors: He is a six-time nominee for Volunteer of the Year, receiving Presidential Points of Light citation at Volunteer Pensacola luncheon on Friday.

What I like best about my job: "Being able to help the kids that need help the most by giving them something they like doing. I want to be there for them to lead them down the right road, to help give them the positive outlooks that help them be successful in life."

My hometown is: Pensacola, now living in Bellview.

I'm a member of: Junior Achievement of Northwest Florida, on the Operational Board and a motivational speaker for at-risk students.

I most admire: "My family." If I won the lottery... "I'd take care of my family and open a big facility that will be able to house as many as 500 kids, involving them recreation and arts activities."

The best advice my parents ever gave me: "Was to try to be better than the best in everything I do."

If I could change anything... "I'd change the way the education system is structured."

My favorite sport: Boxing. My favorite music/ group is: Rhythm and blues/Gerald Lavert.

My favorite food is: Pork chops.

My hobbies: Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association. PCARA is my hobby, recreation, and mission in life.

Pet peeve: "The juvenile detention center has so many activities available, a lot of the kids I deal with want to go to lock-up. It's more fun than being at home or in school. I'd like to see it re-structured to be something they would not like so much and to focus on helping early offenders turn around their lives. Right now it's too much fun."

PCARA Protest Substance Abuse

by LaDonna Williams

The Pensacola Arts and Recreation Association sponsored a march, last Sunday, in which Escambia County Residents protested rising drug activity in the community.

A banner reading, "We don't want crack cocaine in our community" led the procession of men, women, and children from the Judicial Center, downtown, to the police department on N. Hayne St. Community leaders as well as local children endured the summer heat chanting a warning that, "Tomorrow may be to late."

According to founder and president, Leroy Williams, this march was one of many weapons the Art and Recreation Association plans to use in its attack on drugs, teen pregnancy, and suicide. "We're an outreach association," said Williams, "We want to reach the community, especially the youth, get them interested, then convince them to stay drug-free and responsible."

See 'Anti-March', page 6



1995



Group is asset to youths

Right choices are encouraged

By Kimberly Blair
News Journal staff writer

Jeff 15, and Karen 14, listen in defiant silence as their big brother lectures them about their wayward ways.

He tells Jeff he'll end up in jail — or worse — if he hangs around gang members. He warns Karen to get her mind on school work and off boys, or she'll end up pregnant.

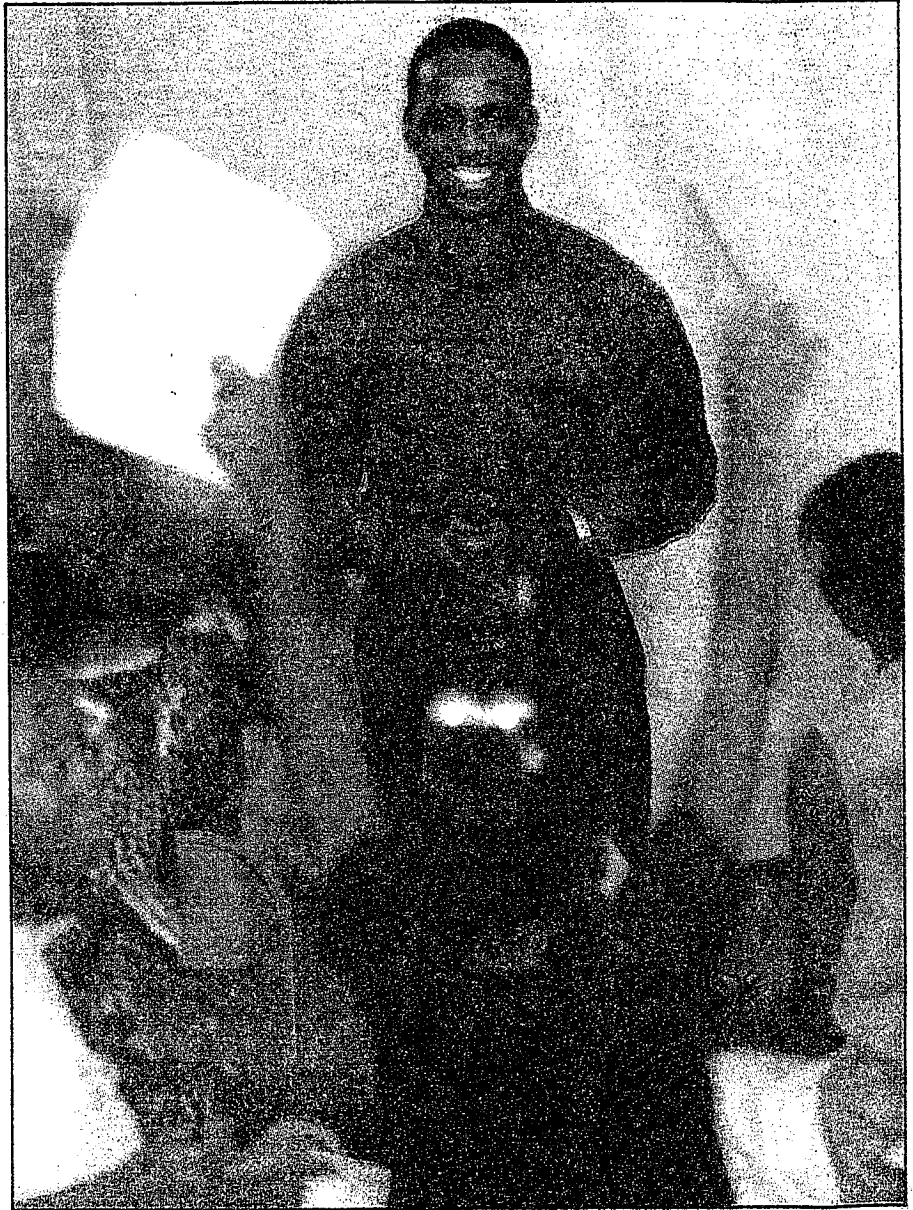
This is the opening scene to Leroy Williams' play, "Don't Be A Victim", which deals with teen pregnancy and gang violence. The play is scheduled to open in late November at the Pensacola Junior College Fine Arts Auditorium.

Williams, 31, is president and co-founder of Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association. Brian Guest, 28, and Williams founded the non-profit organization in June 1987.

The play is one of many fun tools the association uses to influence youths about how to resist drugs, sex and violence. The group hammers out common teen problems through acting, building self-esteem through singing and dancing, drilling out options for anger while boxing and tacking down self-discipline through weight lifting and aerobics.

About 90 youths from throughout Pensacola participate in the organization each

See GROUP, 2C



Steve Mawyer/News Journal photographer
Leroy Williams, one of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association leaders, teaches kids to stay out of trouble through programs that include drama and aerobics.

Group encourages youths to make right choices

FROM 1C
year.

Once a year the members, including parents and volunteers hold a nonviolence rally and rally support through a Community Networking and Getting Involved Funfest, which hundreds attend.

"This is good stuff they are being taught," said Mildred Dillon, 24, pointing to the words, Integrity, Community Pride, Justice, Faith, Hope, Respect and Nonviolence

on the wall of their meeting room in the Human Relations building on Spring Street. Dillon became a volunteer three months ago after seeing one of the group's plays.

Williams' can draw on his personal experiences when writing the motivational plays.

He grew up in an environment filled with drugs, violence and teen pregnancy. When his parents died just three weeks apart in 1983, he had to help support his grandmother and siblings.

"The chance of succeeding in that environment was limited," he said. Those who did usually had several things in common, determination and someone in their life encouraging them.

Williams was full of determination. Encouragement came from his grandmother, Rosalie McAllister, and Patrick Driver, a man who worked at the old Trailways Bus Station that was on Williams' paper route.

"My grandmother raised me to

believe no matter how hard life gets, be the best I can be," he said. Driver continually motivated him to keep working and striving for success.

Williams and Guest want their organization to be the Rosalie McAllister and Patrick Driver in other children's lives.

It was for Denisha Collins. The 20-year-old University of West Florida public relations student developed a positive attitude while participating in PCARA for

seven years.

"It showed me what the future can be," Collins said. Now, she is a volunteer who mentors others such as Tataishi Burgess, 10, and Latesha Robinson, 12.

Robinson is learning to deal with the regular teasing she endures on the school bus for being the shortest seventh-grader at Jim Bailey Middle School.

"I've changed my attitude and don't let it get to me anymore," she said. "PCARA is a place you can

WANT TO JOIN?

Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association meets at 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays at the Human Relations Commission Building, 28 S. Spring St. Details: 444-0846/444-0677

find someone to talk to and they help us make the right choices."

Fun Fest focuses on responsibility

By Brad Barnes
News Journal staff writer

The message sounded almost like it was plucked from a civil rights rally. "Yesterday is a canceled check. Tomorrow is a promissory note," belted Leroy Williams.

"Today is all you've got," he said in a testimonial packed with as much reverence and passion as a preacher's sermon.

Williams, president of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, spoke to 130 children ages 9 to 15 at the fifth annual Fun Fest at Pensacola Junior College Saturday.

The festival coupled workshops on subjects such as AIDS and drug prevention with fun stuff,

like an egg carry relay and a basketball dribbling contest.

Williams' audience wasn't old enough to remember the civil rights movement, which shaped his generation; but he believes the children understand the defining social problems — such as AIDS and drug abuse — that are shaping their generation.

The unifying theme was responsibility. And it was presented to the children in many forms. Well-worn cautions like avoiding drugs and abstaining from sex were side-by-side with ideas like "go to college."

And while some may think the kids are too young to learn about things such as AIDS, Williams says they are not young enough. "We should've hit them youn-

ger," he said. "If we scare them now, they'll think twice."

John Gines, 14, didn't think he was too young to hear about AIDS. In fact, "I've heard it before," he said. Gines was part of a group that traveled from Biloxi, Miss., to take part in the program.

Many children said they learned most from the AIDS presentation.

"We learned the three ways you can get AIDS — through unprotected sex, through needles and through birth," rattled off 12-year-old Marcus McDonald, without so much as a blush at the "S" word.

McDonald belongs to PCARA and takes part in its plays and talent shows.

The association was formed in 1987 to prevent teen pregnancy, drug use and suicide.



John Blackie/News-Journal photographer

Javaris Dixon spoons an egg to Jade Brown, and Curtis Cephas stands ready to catch it if need be Saturday at the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's Fun Fest.



1994



Sunday, July 3, 1994

Q&A

Making a difference

From a broken family to a healing vision

Question: What is the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association (PCARA)?

Answer: It was founded in 1987 by myself and Brian Guest, the vice-president. The second vice president is Julius Benson. Our main goals are to help prevent teen pregnancy, drug prevention and suicide. We do this through meeting with youth on Wednesdays and Sundays, including workshops, raps sessions and speakers on different topics once a month.

We try to motivate them to continue their education. We try to take at least 20 kids at least once a year to Florida State University to give them a little insight on how college life is. We have a tutoring program to help the kids maintain at least a C average in school.

To get a chance to know the youth, we set up what we call a night out on the town once a month, and that's where we take the kids to movies, or skating, whatever they like to do. We just hang out with the kids in their environment.

Once a year we sponsor a motorcade for a drug and crime-free community, also a walk for a drug and crime-free community. The purpose of these motorcades is to again try to give all concerned people an opportunity to join in and take a stand.

And we use it to send messages to the drug dealers and criminals to let them know we refuse to let them destroy our community and the future of our youth.

We're most noted for performing theatrical plays such as "Crack Cocaine is Not the Way of Life," "Drugs, You Make the Decisions," "Don't be a Victim" and "Have you Heard About Sam," which is about AIDS awareness.

We also have recreation programs — I teach boxing on Mondays and Thursdays to teach self discipline.

Other events include a leadership retreat once a year and a recreational retreat once a year. We do a lot of black history programs, we have basketball and softball tournaments and talent and variety shows.

Q: Where do you find the kids you work with?

A: We recruit the kids through our performances, rallies, motorcades, all of our events. Whenever we do anything we're out recruiting people. We go out in the community and talk to kids we see playing and ask if they want to join, we visit the drug-infested areas to recruit kids. But not all of our kids are from drug-infested areas.

I would say at least 80-90 kids go through PCARA in a year. It's not restricted to kids, but anyone who wants to be involved. And it's not just black kids — we've had a great mix of all races. It's been great.

One of our main things is to bring about unity among all people. We want to try and work with everyone. The only way we can reach our goals is to work with everyone, not just one group of people.

Q: What do you see happening with kids today?

A: I think the problem our youth face is a broader picture than is being exposed. I think the youth in our community need a lot more help and attention than they're getting because a lot of things are going unseen.

Next week: Leroy Williams talks about those unseen things, how PCARA reaches children, and his ideas on why so many children seem out of reach.

Q: You work and attend school — how do you find the time for the work you do with PCARA?

A: I spend a great deal of time, anywhere from 30 to 40 hours per week, with the program. Sometimes more than that, such as when we're doing an event.

One of the things that motivates me is I come from an environment that was — I was one of the ones that was less likely to succeed. I had to come up through the hard way, and I decided that if I can make it anyone can. I thank the Lord for allowing me to get this far in life. I feel it's important that I give back to the community what it gave to me, and that's a chance to be successful.

It's very stressful, and some nights I might not get two or three hours sleep, but I have the willpower to keep on pushing. It's hard sometimes. But the time just creeps right in there and I'm able to keep on.

*Leroy Williams
is president of
Pensacola
Community Arts
and Recreation
Association. He
can be reached
at 444-0646.*



Q: What is your background?

A: I'm from Pensacola. My family was a real bad structure; we never had a real close family, there were a lot of shootings and killings, it was terrifying on my part. Everything around me was negative. My father was killed in 1983, my mother died three days later, and we just struggled the whole way.

Now, that gave me the will to help people.

I think I never turned loose of hope, of being someone, and even when I was a young child I understood there was a God that existed, and I always kept God in my heart and prayed a lot; he's the one that brought me this far.

PCARA originally was called Leroy's Boxing Club. I boxed for 12 years; my dream was shattered when my parents passed away. I had a shot for the 1984 Olympic trials. Then I went out to the Naval Air Station as a student aide and I couldn't leave the job — I needed it to help my grandma support myself and three others, so I couldn't leave.

Q: How did that lead to PCARA?

A: What I decided was, if I can't accomplish this myself, maybe I can accomplish this with other people. This was when I was going out into the parks and teaching kids to box.

Then this vision came into my head to write this play to tell people drugs were not the way of life.

And then I proposed this idea to some friends at the Human Relations Commission and they set up a meeting with community leaders — preachers, lawyers, doctors, School Board people — we sat around a table and put our heads together and came up with PCARA because of the versatility of being able to offer more to the people in the community through theater and recreation.

Q&A

Making a difference

Some stuck in the past, some bored with today

Question: A lot of people are ready to give up on kids today. As president of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association (PCARA), do you find it hard to reach them?

Answer: Not really. With the way things are — I call the '90s the fast zone — I think it's pretty easy to reach them. I know what they want. All kids want today is love and attention.

Q: How do you draw them in?

A: By listening to their ideas. What we do in PCARA is listen to the kids. It's an organization designed to give youth a chance to do the things they want to do. In doing that we try to be there to correct the situation in a positive way, and that's why I think we're successful.

If the kids want to have a party, we let them. But we correct the situation by letting them know drugs and alcohol are not needed to have a party.

In education, we motivate them by taking them to Florida State University and talk about all the good things they're going to have, being away from home and mingling with college students, go shopping, but at the same time we're feeding them positive things they need to know — how college life is, introducing them to careers.

We constantly preach to them this is your organization, this is an opportunity to do what you want to do, and they like to hear that. They bring in their friends, their cousins — it's a fun organization.

Q: Last week you said your background helped motivate you to work with troubled kids. Did you use drugs?

A: I had a brief experience with drugs in high school, being persuaded by my friends, meeting people who sell them, coming through my family. It gave me all the knowledge I needed to be able to understand what people are faced with.

One night I was smoking a joint with some friends and I stopped in the midst of it and thought, here I want to be someone, and how can I if I keep using drugs, which keep me from it? I threw the joint down and that was it.

It cost me a lot of my friends. But those same friends today praise me for being the person I am. They always remind me, "We know where you came from." But I never lost sight of where I came from.

Q: Last week you said a lot of things are going on with kids that don't get enough attention. Like what?

A: Well, with the drugs, with crack and now there's a new drug on the street that's even more powerful than crack that is starting to take a major effect on our youth. I think it's called ice, and I've heard other names for it. It's starting to destroy our youth more than anything.

As far as education, youth are not interested; it seems like everything is a bore to them. And it's like the system is not trying to do anything to change that so kids will want education.

I see so much and it hurts me so badly. You suggest things, but you know how that is — community leaders look at you as a small-timer.

Leroy Williams is president of Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association. He can be reached at 444-0646.



Q: There's resistance to changing the way we deal with kids?

A: I think the older generation has not turned loose of the way things used to be. I think the younger generation is not accepting the way things used to be, and it's like a gap in between.

Because the younger people are in a situation not in their control, they've got to listen and they've got to abide by the things the older generation has to give them, (but) they are bored by it.

To say to a youth today this is the way things were for me when I was your age — they're quick to say this is not your age.

Q: Don't you find this terribly frustrating?

A: I used to spend a lot of time pulling my hair out about kids, seeing them and knowing they need help and won't listen; they're all balled up inside, saying "I don't need help." I had to learn the hard way, you can't help someone if they don't want to help themselves. I don't care who it is, your kids or someone else's.

On the funding aspect, it's hard to see organizations out there that are getting funded that are not doing a lot for the community, and our organization is doing an outstanding job — and we can prove it — and getting no (regular) funding.

You get a lot of people out there that will admire the things you do and will even offer to help you, but when you go to them for help, it's a different story.

But with putting God first, every time we come up with an event to help the kids, God always makes a way.

One of the things that makes me keep doing this is when someone comes back and says thank you; that to me is like energy to motivate me to continue to do.

Q: How do you operate?

A: Partly with the cooperation of the Human Relations Commission and Eugene Brown, who let us in to use their facilities when everyone else in essence shut their doors in our face.

Another is Dr. Paul Rollins at HHS (state Department of Health and Human Services). After learning about our organization he took a lot of interest in our success. He always finds ways to help us.

We have to really get out and hustle — we're non-profit, but we're not regularly funded by any outside organization. For example, when we're going to take the kids to FSU, we come up with the cost and try to raise from there. We have a few sponsors, like Drs. Willis & Hutchins, and Terrence A. Gross.

Otherwise we raise our money through car washes, dinner sales, talent and fashion shows, plays and skits, gospel music concerts. HHS funded the recreation retreat last year for \$2,500.

Q: What's on your wish list?

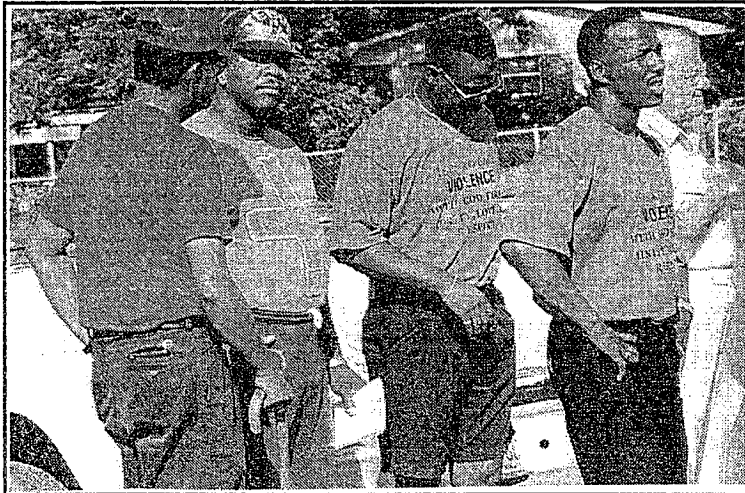
A: A van, or a couple of vans. A lot of kids would like to join but can't because they lack transportation. If we had it we could get them.

If we had a facility that could house all our activities, that would help. And maybe one of these days we can be funded.

This is the second of two parts.

Comm

PCARA Hosts Rally for Non-Violence



by Cheryl C. Johnson

Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association (PCARA) held a rally to target the youth of the city and convey a positive message of non-violence Saturday at the Terry Wayne East Youth Ball Park.

The rally, themed "United Together for Non-Violence", featured a host of speakers, local leaders, entertainment, free food and entertainment. The one thing that could not be found was a spirit of disunity and violence.

PCARA president Leroy Williams and PCARA second vice-president Julius Benson worked tirelessly with community leaders to bring this event to fruition. The youth received guidance from a minagerie of people who were willing to share of their time and their wisdom. Rev. John Powell, Sr. of the Youth for Truth Ministries spoke to the kids about commitment to do-

ing what is right. Powell sponsors lock-ins at the Fricker Center where kids come and spend the night and compete a games and listen to guest speakers. Powell says he does this to give the kids a sense of self-worth and to keep them off of the streets.

Other speakers included Ernest Blond, Chairman of Terry Wayne East Park; Delois Hollinger, Vice President, AmSouth Bank; Superintendent of Schools Bill Maloy; Councilman Jimmie Perkins; Rev. Robert Likely, Pastor of Second Mt. Carmel Baptist Church; Rev. James H. Miller, Pastor of First Baptist Church, Warrington; D.D. Sharp, News Anchor for CBS AKA Montgomery; Commissioner Willie Junior; WBLX News Director Beverly McDowell; Escambia School Board Member, Dr. Elmer Jenkins; Atty. Cheryl J. Howard; Atty. Julian Harris;

Essie O. Moore, President of 100 Pensacola Women United; Boxing Champion Roy Jones, Jr.; Dr. Addie June Hall; Mary Williams; and Wandy Sleet, Program Coordinator, Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc.

The hosts for the event was Mistress of Ceremonies Raychelle Gaston Shomoe, News Director for WRNE radio; and J.B. Louis, Program Director for WBLX radio. Entertainment was provided by soloists Ruby Knight, Sheinetta Bell, Colecta Johnson, DJ's Blue & Teddy Weddy, Kenita Michell, Tawanda Edwards & Sheneitra Turner, female singing sensations "Lady Like", and Mike Hall & the African American Production.

PCARA left the youth with one final thought to meditate and grow on. They urged them to "Replace violence with God first, unity, love and respect."



Young people rally 'round nonviolence

By Cindy West
News Journal correspondent

The message was simple. "We want to replace violence with God first, unity, love and respect," said Leroy Williams, president of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.

He spoke Saturday at the "United Together for Non-Violence" rally.

"If you have God in your life first, that will lead you away from violence and when you have unity, that brings about togetherness and you won't have the desire to be violent," Williams said.

Quida Saunders, 10, and Marcus McDonald, 11, both of Pensacola, said they recognized the importance of the rally and the need for nonviolence.

"I'm out to fight against drugs, and I've seen a lot of people who

do drugs on the street," Quida said.

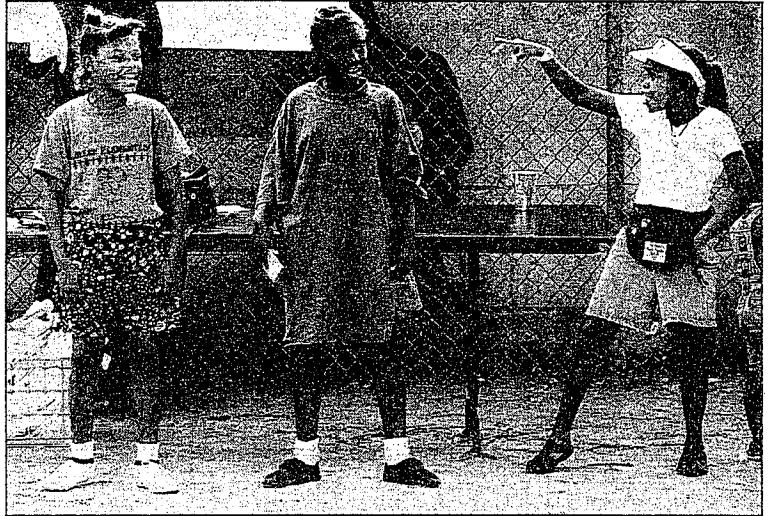
Marcus said he has learned through the association that "drugs and violence are bad."

Businesses and residents need to join to fight violence in the community, said Delois Hollinger, a vice president at AmSouth Bank, one of the rally sponsors.

"There has been a lot of focus on the national issue of violence and family violence," Hollinger said. "This is a positive way of fighting the problem of violence. The first step has to be recognition — we have to recognize there's a problem."

Pensacola City Councilman Jimmie Perkins mentioned the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and noted that he would be upset by the amount of violence in communities.

"We should be educating it up instead of drugging it up," Perkins said.



John Blackie/News Journal

Kenita Mitchell, 9, right, shows her dance steps to Irma Scott, 10, left, and Quida Saunders, 10 during Saturday's nonviolence rally held by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association at Terry Wayne East Youth Ball Park in Pensacola.

Community

Youth Acknowledged for efforts in Ethnic Expressions/ AmSouth Bank Black History Contest



Jermaine Justin Williams, right, proudly displays his first prize art piece as second place winner Nikki Gatson, center, and third prize winner Quida Sanders, left, join together to congratulate him. The youth were winners in a Black History Contest sponsored by AmSouth Bank and Ethnic Expressions. The contest was open to all students between the ages of 8 and 18, and involved identifying the historical figures in the painting. AmSouth Bank of Town & Country Plaza and Ethnic Expressions thanks all the children and their parents who were able to participate.

by Cheryl C. Johnson

AmSouth Bank of Florida, Town & Country Branch along with Sonya Culliver and Ethnic Expressions held a contest during the month of February in celebration of Black History Month. The object of the contest was to identify the African American leaders depicted in a painting. Each person in the painting played a part in African American history by projecting a social, historical, educational or religious doctrine to uplift the Black race during the 19th and 20th centuries. The painting, rendered by Cornell Barnes of Baltimore, MD, (valued at \$135) contained the likenesses of Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Malcolm X, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to name a

few, and was given as first prize to 12-year-old Jermaine Justin Williams who successfully named all 13 likenesses. Jermaine is the son of Synetta Harris and is a 6th grader at Sacred Heart Catholic School.

A \$100 US Savings Bond was awarded to second place winner Charmere Nicole (Nikki) Gatson, an 11-year-old 6th grader at Pensacola Christian School. She is the daughter of Minister and Mrs. James O. Gatson.

Nine-year-old Quida Sanders garnered a 3rd place \$50 Pockets McPhee Savings Account for her efforts in the contest. Quida is the daughter of Ouida Sanders and a fourth grade student at Pensacola Christian School.



1993



THEATER

Group presents black history program

The Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association will present a program, "Memories of Yesterday," in celebration of Black History Month at 4 p.m. Sunday at the Pensacola Junior College Student Center.

The program features two one-act plays; skits and gospel music. Admission is free, but donations will be accepted to help finance the Martin Luther King Plaza as well as the association. Details: 444-0646, 444-0677.



Cast members rehearse a scene from the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's Black history program that goes on stage Sunday.

Children's retreat mixes fun, drug education

By Tony Welch
News Journal

Make sure kids have fun and they might just learn something useful.

Leroy Williams, president of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, said he hopes that logic works at his organization's first recreation retreat and workshop for about 40 local children.

The association plans to weave workshops on drug awareness, teen-age pregnancy and responsibility with recreation, including a mullet toss and

volleyball, at a retreat at Big Lagoon State Park today.

"We're letting them have a good time and at the same time feeding them the information that they need," Williams said.

The children range in age from 11 to 18. Some reside in such drug-plagued areas as Escambia Arms, Truman Arms and the Wedgewood area, Williams said.

Association members "picked the kids we felt needed this workshop the most," he said. More than 75 children were recruited for the retreat.

"What they're doing is excellent and needs to be supported," said Paul Rollings, district director for the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Program, which funded the retreat with a \$1,000 grant through the Community Drug and Alcohol Commission.

"It's people helping other people," Rollings said. "It's a grass roots effort. I think that's where we're going to win or lose the war on drugs."

Williams and others formed the association 18 months ago. It now has 50 members. The group has sponsored two

anti-drug plays including "Crack Cocaine is not the Way of Life."

Williams said he remembers a retreat when he was a member of Pensacola Junior College's student government. "It did something to me. I learned a lot," Williams said.

Maybe today's workshops and fun will have a similar effect on the attendees, he said. "I hope it plays a part in their future and gives them something they can reach back and remember."

The association plans a similar workshop or retreat for the parents.

LOCAL

Marchers want to stamp out drugs and crime

By Brad Barnes
News Journal

Concerned residents will gather Saturday morning at the M.C. Blanchard Judicial Building to march against the drugs and crime they feel have taken over their city.

"We refuse to let them destroy our community," Leroy Williams said about Pensacola's drug dealers and criminals.

Williams is president of Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, the group that is sponsoring Saturday's march.

COMMUNITY

"We feel that if all concerned people come together in our community we can lower the crime rate and put the drug dealers out of business," he said.

This year's march will be the fifth annual event for the group. Last year's drew about 80 people, and they're looking for even more this year — about 100 or more.

The walk is open to everyone. Participants will begin and end at the Judicial

Building, winding a route through about two miles of downtown Pensacola. Marchers are encouraged to bring their own banners or posters expressing their ideas for making Pensacola a crime-free community.

Marchers will assemble at 9 a.m. for an opening ceremony with a guest speaker, followed by the march and a closing ceremony with another guest speaker.

Officials won't name the guest speakers in advance, but past speakers have represented the Sheriff's Department, the Police Department and School Board.

"They will get up and shed some en-

WANT TO MARCH?

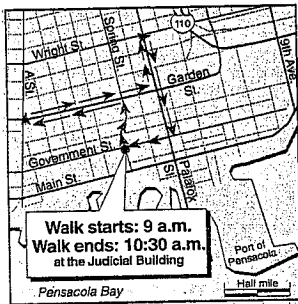
WHAT: Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's Walk for a Drug and Crime-Free Community.

WHEN: 9 to 10:30 a.m. Saturday.

WHERE: M.C. Blanchard Judicial Building.

DETAILS: 444-0677, 444-0646.

lightenment and words of encouragement for our efforts," group vice president Brian Guest said.

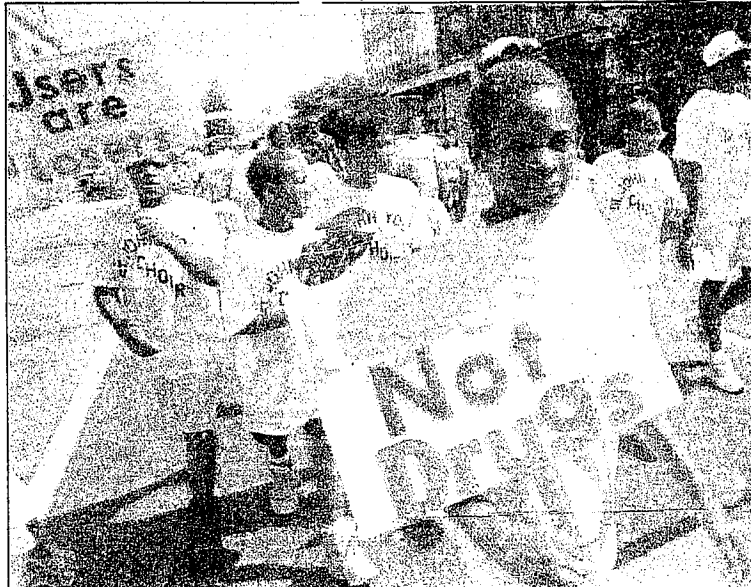


News Journal graphic

BANDING TOGETHER

Sunday, June 13, 1993

Pensacola News Journal



Photos by Steve Mawyer/News Journal

Rakisha Collins, 11, carries her "Hugs Not Drugs" sign during the PCARA-sponsored march against drugs Saturday in downtown Pensacola.

Kids join anti-drug march

Fed-up residents want to reclaim neighborhoods

By Joey Bunch
News Journal

Chanting "up with hope, down with dope," about 125 people marched the streets of downtown Pensacola on Saturday morning.

They carried signs that said things like "Get high on life, get loaded on education" as lights whirled from a police and Sheriff's Department motorcycle escort.

They were there to take back their community from drug dealers, casual drug users and criminals, said organizers of the fourth annual Walk For a Drug and Crime-Free Community, sponsored by Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.

"We're here to stop violence," said 11-year-old Rakisha Collins, who came with 25 members of the youth choir from St. John's Baptist Church.

Amanda McClain, 7, said she joined the 2-mile march because "I do not like drugs."

Leroy Williams had to be pleased.

WILLIAMS, PRESIDENT and co-founder of the 6-year-old PCARA, pushes events and encouragement to area youth. The group hopes events like the march help kids understand the pitfalls of drugs and crime and the fun, satisfaction and self-esteem that



The Rev. Anthony Sangfield II, 13, delivers a prayer before the march comes from clean living.

"These kids are what it's all about," Williams told parents, city, county and judicial leaders in a speech before the march began.

The march included children affiliated with the association, the Community Drug and Alcohol Commission, DARE program,

HOW TO HELP

The Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association is a nonprofit local youth group that raises funds through bake sales, car washes and plays that emphasize the dangers of drugs, alcohol and crime.

If you can help or are interested in putting on a play at your church or civic hall, call Leroy Williams at 444-0646 or Brian Guest at 444-0677.

churches and scout groups.

"To come together is a beginning," Williams said. "To work together is progress. To stay together is success."

The Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association started the event four years ago. This year's march drew the largest crowd, which included city and county officials, law enforcement agencies and judges.

Ted Johnson, 9, plays basketball, softball and goes to parties with about 30 other kids, including his brother, Ariell, 8. Ted quickly came up with the group's message: "Don't do drugs."

His mother, Cheryl Johnson, said the group gives her sons good community role models "and reinforces the message they get at home."

Cars drive home message against violence, drugs

A motorcade promoting a non-violent and drug-free community starts at 10 a.m. today at the Cordova Mall parking lot on Bayou Boulevard. Decorated cars will travel south on Ninth Avenue, east on Cervantes Street, south on Spring Street and end at the M.C. Blanchard Judicial Building.

The motorcade is sponsored by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association. For details, call 444-0646 or 444-0677.

Motorcade for a Non-Violent and Drug-Free Community



News Journal graphic

Motorcade drives home message against drugs

Vehicles bear banners condemning violence

By Keith Phillips
News Journal

A motorcade of 25 cars, motorcycles and RVs took to the streets of Pensacola on Saturday to take a stand against drugs and violence.

Organized by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, the motorcade for a Drug-Free and Violence-Free Community paraded from Cordova Mall to the Escambia County Judicial Building, catching the attention of motorists and pedestrians.

And the attention wasn't wasted: Each car displayed posters and banners with anti-drug and anti-violence messages.

"We want to send a message that says we refuse to let violence and drugs destroy our community," said Leroy Wil-

COMMUNITY

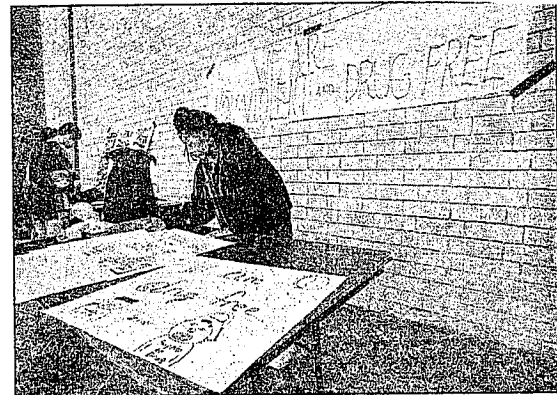
liams, association president. "Our purpose with this event is to give everyday citizens an opportunity to take a stand for a violence- and drug-free community."

Escambia County Sheriff's Lt. Bobby Jackson told participants that law enforcement needs their help in an increasingly lawless society.

"It seems that America is hooked on drugs these days and obsessed with violence," he said.

But the motorcade held a special message for children that drugs are not

See YOUTHS, 2B



John Blackie/News Journal

Melinda Lee prepares posters for the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association rally and motorcade for a non-violent and drug-free community.

November 25 - December 01, 1993



Organizers as well as concerned citizens drive down Bayou Blvd. in a motorcade held last Saturday advocating a drug and violence free community

Citizens stand up against drugs and violence in their community

by Alphonsa Henderson

The Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association (PCARA) held a motorcade last Saturday in which concerned citizens drove vehicles plastered with signs advocating a drug and violence free community.

The police escorted motorcade had participation from various organizations such as Vans Unlimited and CDAC as well as fed-up citizens.

The event commenced outside the movie theaters on Bayou

Vice President of PCARA, gave the purpose of the motorcade.

"Everyone must ask themselves: What can I do to help solve the problem of drugs and violence in the community. The answer is to get involved," stated Benson. He also encouraged individuals to support efforts by other organizations which are trying to eliminate problems in the community. Leroy Williams, President, added, "The motorcade sends out two messages. One, concerned citizens are taking a stand against drugs and violence

in our community. Two, it lets

thing know that there is a vehicle by which their voice can be heard."

Bobby Jackson, an officer with the Escambia County Sheriff Department, was the opening inspirational speaker at the motorcade kick-off. Jackson opened his speech by noting that America is hooked on drugs. He also expressed that drugs affect everyone including wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, etc. "There are two reasons why you say No to Drugs," stated Jackson, "One, violence comes along with drugs, and two, addiction

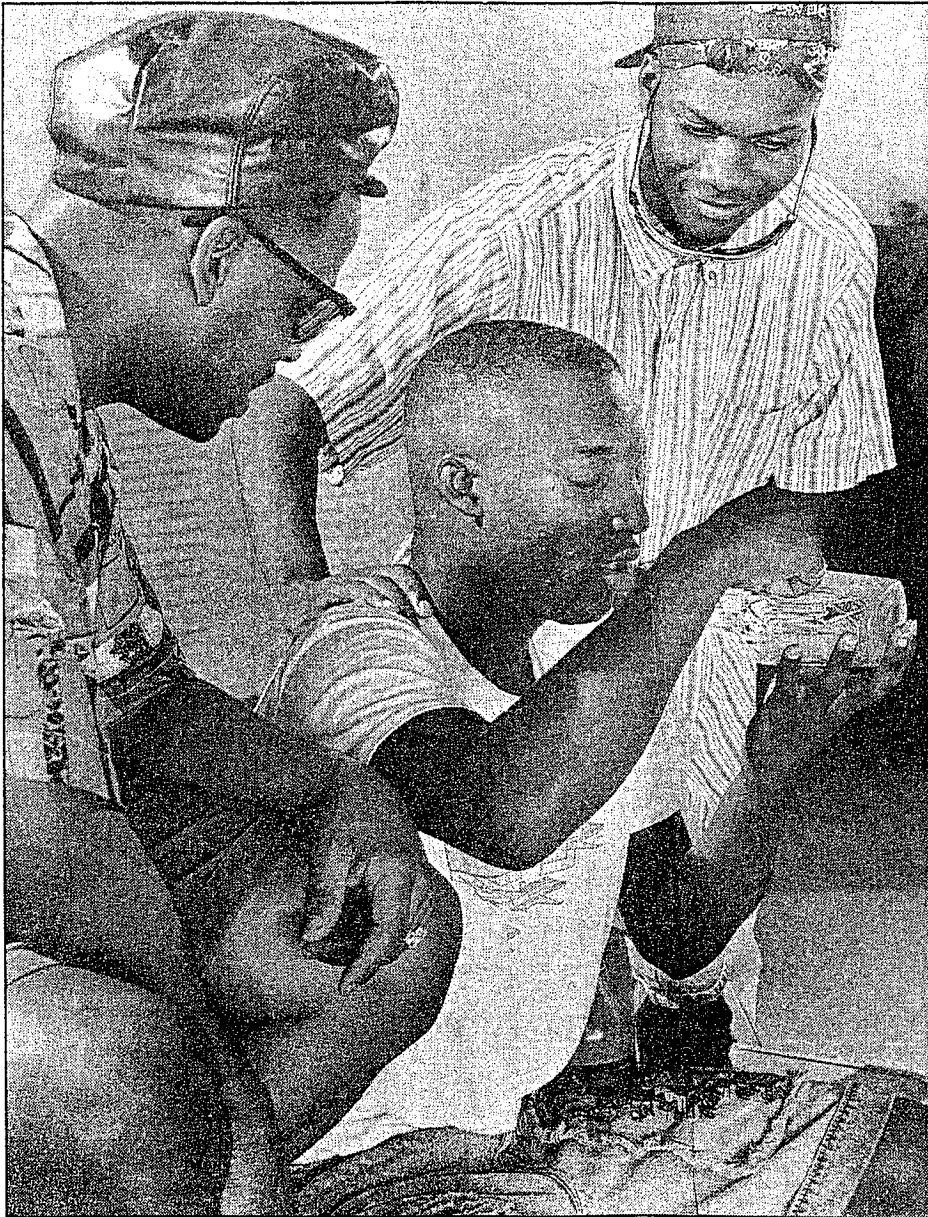


Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association

1992



www.pcaraonline.com



Mike (Kermit Lander, left) talks Jeff (Ernest George, center) into using crack with the help of Bruce (Kenyata Tolbert) in Leroy Williams' play, "Don't Be A Victim," to be performed today at Pensacola Junior College.

Bruce Graner/News Journal

DRAMAS

that hit home

Anti-drug, anti-violence plays target troubled teens

By Charlene Sims
News Journal

Members of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association are taking their message to the stage.

In an effort to persuade teens not to give in to negative peer pressure, PCARA and Pensacola Junior College's Secondary Education Department are sponsoring a pair of anti-violence and anti-drug plays.

The plays, "Don't Be a Victim" and "Drugs — You Make the Decision," were both written by Leroy Williams, president of PCARA.

They will be performed today at Pensacola Junior College.

"Drugs — You Make the Decision" will be performed at 2 p.m. for PJC students only and features students in the Secondary Education Department at PJC. Both "Drugs" and "Don't be a Victim," featuring community teens and members of PCARA, is scheduled to start at 7 p.m. for the general public.

"Drugs — You make the Decision" is an attack on drug usage, says Roy Hammond, who plays a judge in the play. "It's holding up drugs for ridicule."

In the play, the characters have to decide if drugs are good or bad and a panel of judges makes the final decision, Hammond says.

Williams says "Drugs — You Make the Decision" forces young people to think about the choices they

See PLAYS, 9D

PAIR OF PLAYS

- **What:** Plays presented by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association and Pensacola Junior College's Secondary Education Department
- **When:** "Drugs — You Make the Decision," 2 p.m. today, repeated at the 7 p.m. show; "Don't Be a Victim," 7 p.m. today
- **Where:** Henry L. Ashmore Fine Arts Auditorium, PJC
- **Cost:** Admission is free for 2 p.m. show for PJC students; suggested donation is \$2 for students and \$4 for adults for the 7 p.m. show
- **Details:** 444-0646; 484-2130

Plays aim to show teens a better way

FROM 1D

make about using drugs.

"It forces them to compare the positive and the negative aspects of using drugs and in the end they see the positive wins," he says.

While "Drugs — You Make the Decision" focuses on drug usage, "Don't Be a Victim" is a play about life, Williams says. "All the things the play addresses are very real to teens. There will be something in the play that has touched every teen-ager's life to some degree.

"The play addresses teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse and peer pressure. These are things every teen-ager experiences at some time in their lives."

WILLIAMS SAYS HE decided to start PCARA and write plays because he wanted to help teens that were headed for trouble.

"I know what it's like growing up and I know how hard it can be for teens not to become victims of things like drugs and pregnancy, and I am willing to do anything I can do to motivate them to change," Williams says.

Other cast members say they wanted to be in the play because it has a strong positive message.

"I became involved in PCARA because I love

children and I think they need older people to help them and to give them advice and guidance. This play also does that because it is real. The things that happen in the play also happen in life," says Mazie Lott, who plays the role of "Mama" in "Don't be a Victim."

"I hope this play shows young people not to get involved in drugs and gangs because that is definitely not the way," Lott says.

Williams says he wanted to make the play as real as possible and because of this it doesn't have the kind of happy ending people usually expect.

"THE PLAY IS based on reality. It doesn't necessarily have a happy ending because life doesn't always have happy endings. Especially with the kind of life these characters are leading," Williams says.

Members of the cast say they are hoping "Don't be a Victim" will have a positive effect on teen-agers.

"We never know if this will help, but we are just hoping that it will get it's point across, says Brian Guest, who plays an undercover police officer in the play.

Guest says the play is very realistic and straightforward about the issues it addresses. The language used throughout the play is language that can be heard in any high school.

SECTION D

PLAYS DELIVER STRONG MESSAGES

Organizers of two plays say they want area youths to realize that they don't have to give in to drugs and negative peer pressure/4D



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Saturday, July 11, 1992

4D

Pensacola News Journal

Saturday, July 11, 1992

ENTERTAINMENT

Audience receives anti-drug, anti-victim messages

By Charlene Sims
News Journal

The plays "Don't be a Victim" and "Drugs — You Make the Decision" sent out strong messages Thursday night and audience members say that message was well-received.

"This was great. I just wish more people could have seen it," said Robin St.Cyr, of New Orleans.

The plays were sponsored by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association and the Secondary Education Department at Pensacola Junior College. Performances were held at the Ashmore Fine Arts Auditorium at PJC.

Organizers of the two anti-violence, anti-drug plays said they wanted area youth to realize that they don't have to give in to drugs and negative peer pressure.

"We wanted them to realize that there are other ways of life," said Donna Dortch, who captivated the audience with her portrayal of Karen, a 16-year-old who gets pregnant in "Don't be a Victim." "Don't Be A Victim" featured



Bruce Graner/News Journal

Police officers arrest Jeff (Ernest George) in rehearsals for the play "Don't be a Victim."

members of PCARA and centered around the lives of teens Karen and Jeff, a brother and sister who thought they were old enough to make decisions for themselves.

They allowed themselves to be persuaded by their peers and in the end realized that peer pressure destroyed their lives.

The realism of "Don't be a Vic-

tim" was part of its success.

The issues it dealt with were very real to teen-agers.

They are issues they encounter from day to day, such as pressure from their friends to have sex and use drugs.

"It was very effective and I think part of that was because it was so realistic," Robin Nicholson of Pensacola said about the play. Nicholson brought her son Chris, 9, to see the play.

"Drugs — You Make the Decision" was performed by students in the Secondary Education Department at PJC.

The courtroom setting centered around a group of criminals trying to prove that drugs are the way of life. They had to convince a panel of judges that they were right in order to keep from going to prison.

They argued their points and were met with counter arguments from the prosecuting panel.

"I thought it was a very good idea and I understood the point they were trying to make," said 13-year-old LaRita Ware. "Both plays were very good and straight

to the point."

Dortch said she became involved with PCARA because she wants to help change lives for the better.

"I am doing this because there is so much negative out there and if I can just help one person change their life, or if I can prevent one person from throwing their life away, then I will feel that I have done my job."

After watching the plays, Chris Nicholson said, "I thought the plays were good and I will never do drugs because I know they are bad."

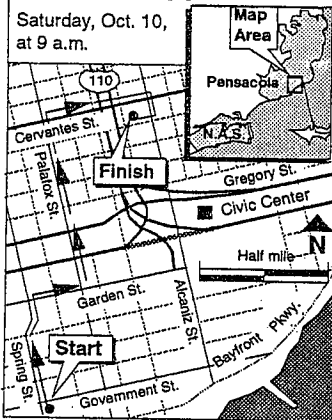
It seems that Dortch did her job and did it well.

Charlene Sims is a summer intern for the News Journal. She can be reached at 435-8516.

Wednesday, October 7, 1992

WALK FOR A DRUG-FREE COMMUNITY

Saturday, Oct. 10, at 9 a.m.



News Journal graphic

Walk organized as part of effort against drugs

The Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association is sponsoring "Walk for a Drug-Free Community" at 9 a.m. Saturday.

The walk will begin at the Judicial Center at 190 Government St. and will end at the Pensacola Police Department at 711 N. Haynes St.

Participants are asked to bring banners and posters. Opening and closing ceremonies will be held and refreshments will be provided. Details: 444-0646 or 444-0677.



Jerry Kovach/News Journal

About 80 people let their feet do the talking in an anti-drug walk through downtown Pensacola on Saturday. The march was organized by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.

Marching with a message

Organization stages walk to speak out against drug abuse

By Keith Phillips
News Journal

Escorted by police cars and motorcycles, about 80 people took to the streets of Pensacola on Saturday to let people know that drugs are a problem in Pensacola.

Organized by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, the marchers left the Judicial Center in Pensacola Saturday morning and walked a two-mile route through downtown to the Pensacola Police Department.

Leroy Williams, president and co-founder of PCARA, said the march

was designed to make people aware that drugs are a problem in Pensacola.

"I think that people think it's a problem but they don't know the extent of the problem" if their family or friends aren't directly affected, he said.

Brothers United for the Community and Sisters United for the Community both had representatives in the march.

"We want the people to know it's a problem and it's not in one particular community. It's in all our communities around Pensacola," said Alton Pugh, secretary of Brothers United for the Community.

"We want to make people aware that this thing exists, it's real, it's

treacherous and it's killing," he said.

Phillip Thomas, who heads an anti-drug program in Seattle, was in Mobile, Ala., for a funeral when he heard about the march and decided to join.

"Even though it's a small walk, participation plants a seed in people's minds," he said.

Other marchers included adults and children from St. Joseph Church Girls Leadership Program, University of West Florida students from Promoting Alcohol Responsibility Through You and mothers and children from Bradley Method drug-free childbirth classes.

Volunteer's work stems from love of children

By Cindy West
News Journal correspondent

Every once in a while, someone comes along who just plain cares about people, particularly children.

Leroy Williams is such a person.

About five years ago, he founded the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, which is dedicated to prevention of drug abuse, teen-age pregnancy and suicide.

He did it, he said, because he has seen first-hand how people can be killed over drugs and how drugs can wreck people's lives.

"I just wanted to reach back and help all those people who say 'I can't.' I grew up in downtown Pensacola. I saw a lot of my friends use drugs, saw a lot of shootings, stabbings and killings — all because of drugs. And I saw a lot of my friends get pregnant at a young age.

"A lot of things pierced my heart. I feel blessed that I was able to escape from all the things that surrounded me that were negative, to reach out and help others."

The association has about 90 members, about 35 active ones.

Members range in age from 9 to 28. They meet from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays and 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Sundays at the Human Relations Commission, 29 S. Spring St.

The group has workshops, shows films and has rap sessions on topics ranging from teen-age pregnancy to AIDS to building self-esteem, Williams said.

"I was in trouble when I was younger," Williams said. "I got in fights. In high school I tried drugs — smoked marijuana, drank alcohol — and it was because my friends were doing it so I decided to do it. I liked it because my friends did, but I really didn't.

"I've lived that life. My family is infested with a lot of violence and drugs. I've been around people who sell cocaine and heroin, and I know the life these people live and the feelings they feel and that's what makes me able to relate to the kids because I've been there before."

Williams took his interest in preventing adolescent problems one step further. He also writes, directs and involves teen-agers in plays on drug awareness/prevention. Youths perform the

plays at churches, schools, civic organizations and wherever they're invited.

"The biggest way to get the anti-drug and teen-age pregnancy messages across is through plays because kids can relate to that. It's something they heard about and been lectured, but they can almost reach out and touch and see it in a play."

The association also encourages youths to maintain at least a C average in school. If they don't or can't, Williams tutors them or finds someone to help.

"Education is the key to success. That's one of our mottos. Without education, it's hard for a person to move forward," he said.

Many times Williams and association youths have headed into area housing projects, taking baseballs and basketballs.

"It's a way of showing them you can have a good time without doing drugs and also it's like a tool to get next to the kids. You've got to first be their friend before you can tell them anything. We teach them how to play football, box, karate, to get them to like us. Then, we'll talk about

the negative things surrounding them they don't need to be involved with."

After the games, sometimes he buys hot dogs, hamburgers and soft drinks for kids and while they're eating, discuss drug prevention. Periodically, someone throws some money his way for the food, but mostly, it comes from him and Brian Guest, the association's vice president.

"I get a real enjoyment out of doing what I do. It's something I like doing and that's why, in a sense, I don't mind spending as much money as needed, if I have it, to support the cause," he said.

Williams, 28, is a plastic mechanic at the Naval Aviation Depot at Pensacola Naval Air Station. He installs windows on aircraft and repairs fiberglass on aircraft.

He's also on the Operational Board for Junior Achievement of Northwest Florida and is active in Junior Achievement's Project Business, where he goes into schools and teaches youths how to build their own business.

Somehow, Williams also finds time to teach youths boxing through the Human Relations Commission.