



40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION of
UNIVERSITY CITY HIGH SCHOOL
1971-72 + 2011-12

Youth Service Helps ‘Reach, Teach’ Pupils

Your United Fund

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Jack Devine and Caesar Hairston, both 17, explained why they liked their new school.

“The people are nice, they’re concerned over here,” Devine said.

“It’s kind of impossible to cut over here,” Hairston said. “It’s more like a club. There aren’t too many problems. And if there is one, you can sit down and talk about it.”

The school coordinator cut in with a grin, “But are you being educated?”

“Yes, I am being educated,” Hairston replied, returning the grin.

Ex-Football Player

The coordinator is James Wright, a former guard with the Cleveland Browns who went from football to a doctorate in education.

Wright saw 14 of his pupils at one disciplinary school for boys in Philadelphia go on to become teachers over a 13-year period. He believes in alternative programs.

“There are many kids that are lost in the big school system; the teachers cannot touch them,” he said.

At 410 N. 34th st., he said, “you can reach, teach and touch the children.”

Devine and Hairston cut most of their classes last year at University City High School.

Chester McGougan, 16, found himself staying home from school to avoid gangs – it’s pretty hip when you can go,” he said.

2 Classes of 10 Each

The three are part of two classes now, each 10 boys, in a new alternative program of their high school and Youth Service, Inc., a United Fund agency at 410 N. 34th.

Their classes are held in a carriage house belonging to the agency and in the agency's three-story main building next door.

Last year, University City High, which has an enrollment of about 2,850, was having gang-related problems.

Academy Established

Ted Levine, executive director of Youth Service, approached Davis Martin, the principal, with the suggestion of setting up an alternative school at the agency for boys needing a smaller school setting.

Martin liked the idea, and the Sunnycrest Academy was established.

"These students would not have been in school this year" [sic] without the new program," he says today.

The carriage house was renovated through funds obtained by the merger of Sunnycrest Far for Boys in Cheyney with Youth Service. Its two teachers for the new program are funded through the Philadelphia Board of Education. A social worker for the new program was also paid for by the school district.

The pupils were chosen from a list prepared by the high school of about 30 truants, "hall walkers," and others who might have been sitting in class but not learning.

A Cross-Section

The list, Levine said, was "an appropriate balance" of pupils – "we didn't want 20 guys ready to rip the building apart, and we didn't want 20 shrinking violets. We wanted a cross-section, from the aggressive to the nonaggressive, all nonperforming."

The boys still attend specialized classes – shop, gym, science lab and auto mechanics – at University City and at the Octavius V. Catto School, 42d and Ludlow sts. They will remain at the school as long as they choose, and as long as they benefit from the experience, until their senior year, when they will return to University City.

Walter L. Hawkins, English and social studies teacher for the two classes, described his pupils as "a tightly knit group – there's not too much disruption," then reflected, "As a matter of fact, there's been no disruption."

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By PAULA HERBUT

Of The Bulletin Staff

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