

Youth get a second chance at Southside Rides

On many weekday mornings Dave Moore can be found teaching lessons about life and cars to his latest group of students at his Winston-Salem auto body repair shop.

The teens, ranging in age from 14 to 19 years old, spend three mornings a week at Southside Rides as part of the Reclaiming Futures Juvenile Drug Court Program overseen by CenterPoint Human Services and Insight Human Services. The program offers substance abuse services to youth entering the court system, which includes special summer activities to keep them focused.

Southside is one of the sites offering summer training, and though the program is new, it is not unfamiliar territory for Moore.

For several years now, Moore — the founder of Southside Rides Foundation — has opened his shop up to those in need of a second chance. Young men and women pass through his garage throughout the year as he works with the court system to get them community service hours and auto-body repair training or access to other career training opportunities. He even offers customized training at the shop through a Forsyth Technical Community College program.

Six teens are participating in the summer program at Southside Rides. Moore said the program has been a success so far, but now he is encouraging the community to get involved.

Moore is asking community members to bring their cars by the shop to let the teens wash them. A \$5 or \$10 donation will go toward a stipend Moore will disburse at the end of each week for the students to spend on items such as clothes or school supplies in preparation for the fall.

But Moore also sees it as a way to engage his students with the community. As they wash people's cars, Moore hopes they can chat with folks and make positive connections. He is also encouraging police officers to stop by and meet the teens to "bridge the gap."

The teens can be found near the shop on Hope Street from 9 a.m. to noon Monday, Wednesday and Friday. They begin their sessions with an hour of exercise at the nearby Better Body Training Facility. The owner is Henry Gray, who has a law enforcement career spanning 28 years. One of their trainers is Derrell Springs, a former gang member who has turned his life around.

Springs said, "I needed a chance. If I can change, they can change."

After spending time at the gym, the teens come back to the shop for a class about auto body work and detailing.

"I think the world of Dave and his program," said Kathi Perkins, system of care coordinator for CenterPoint and Reclaiming Futures treatment fellow. "I think the community really benefits from someone like him in the community and doing the type of work that he does."

Bryant Williams is a testament to Moore's training. He was fresh from prison when he began participating in a Southside program in March 2011. With his criminal record, Williams had a hard time finding a job.

"Now I've got a skill and a trade," said Williams.

Williams said he never envisioned himself attending college, but thanks to what he learned at Southside, he is now a student at Forsyth Tech working on his degree in collision repair and refinishing.

He said of Southside: "It gives you a lot of doors to open up. It's up to you. Are you gonna turn the knob or not?"

Jermeka Fulton speaks with young women at the garage about her life story. She tells of how she got in trouble at age 19 and spent several years in prison. Now she has been home for eight months and has a job, a car and her son back. Fulton talks about how she could have given up but she didn't, and she praises the encouragement Moore provides.

The summer program will continue until Aug. 10, when Moore plans to have a car show fundraiser and a graduation ceremony for the students. But his work will not end there. For Moore, the work to change lives is never done.

For more information, visit www.southsideridesfoundation.org.

mevans@wsjournal.com

(336) 727-7204