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Step show gives a lesson on college

Sorority members perform for students at Carroll Hill School

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First published: Friday, February 16, 2007

TROY -- Having earned a bachelor's degree and two master's and completed work on his doctorate, Principal Casey Parker wants his 310 students at the Carroll Hill School to think about going to college.

That's why -- after the school's daily 8:05 a.m morning assembly recently -- Parker brought in members of the Zeta Phi Beta sorority from the University at Albany.

"When I was young I had a cousin who participated in a historically black fraternity," said Parker, recalling his relative and noting how watching his relative's fraternity give step show performances had an impact on him. That's why four members of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority performed their step show on the school's stage.

"I hope to convince some of our students to go to school," said Parker, who previously taught at Philip Livingston Magnet School in Albany.

Dressed in white jerseys and blue jeans, Falon McKinney, Tiesha Grant, Tiffanie Smith and Brandi Davis stomped and clapped through a performance that captured the students' interest.

"It's so wonderful," Davis said about performing for the elementary school children.

Davis, 24, teaches at the Unity Sunshine Program in Troy.

"Just having little kids see that, as students in college, there are benefits," Davi said.

Fourth-grader Veronica Felix, 9, was one of the four students invited up on stage to try some steps.

"That was really fun," Veronica said. "I can do some of it."

Third-grader Malia Martinez, 8, also was caught up in the excitement of performing on stage.

"The stepping, I liked it," she said.

The day was not only about the sorority's step dancing, which last year saw a group of 14 of the sorority sisters perform at the Palace Theatre in Albany. It also marked Black History Month at the school.

Troy City School District Board of Education member Archiah told the students about various historic events in February that are important in black history. "College students often participated in these events and made a difference," Phillips said.

Davis, Grant, McKinney and Smith also read to the students and answered questions.

"It's very hard," Smith, a 21-year-old senior math major, told two classes of students about learning the step routines and performing.

"It's part of my sorority's traditions. We make up steps," she explained.

Grant, 23, is a graduate of the state university and teaches at the North Albany Academy. McKinney, 21, is a senior biology major.

Smith said she was glad to see the students' interest.

And Parker felt the program was worthwhile when Veronica came to him and told him that she saw step dancing in her future.

"I want to do that when I go to college," Parker said about the girl's quick remark.

"That's exactly what I want," he said smiling.

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