

 print window  close window 

 Published: Mar 31, 2010 02:00 AM
 Modified: Mar 30, 2010 08:02 AM

Café feeds the body, mind

BY ANDREW KENNEY, Staff Writer

CLAYTON - At Kids Café, good food runs alongside good grades. The program offers tutoring and after-school care for 40 children from Cooper Elementary School, and it aims to instill healthy eating and study habits alike.

"You can't study on a hungry stomach," said Mike Sims, director of the Kids Café board in Clayton. "It's important to make sure that they get fed."

The Clayton program is part of a nationwide effort started by Feeding America that includes 27 sites overseen by the Food Bank of Eastern & Central North Carolina. For three years, Kids Café in Clayton has targeted children who have lagged in grades and testing, and staff and parents said they see better behavior and grades by the end of the school year.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina contributes about \$16,000 a year for the Food Bank to provide a free frozen dinner daily for each student in the program. Sims plans to add nutrition lessons between volunteer tutoring and study sessions too.

"We don't have to fight over homework," said Melanie Wiles, whose 8-year-old daughter attends the program. "Both years, her spelling grades went up drastically."

The Clayton center, which runs on about \$15,000 per year outside of food costs, draws support from businesses, governments and everyday people in Johnston County, including free use of a New Trinity Missionary Baptist Church



Contevia Atkinson, 9, sips a juice box over a game of mancala at Kids Café last week.
 Herald photo by Andrew Kenney

Story Tools

-  [Printer Friendly](#)
-  [Email to a Friend](#)
-  [Enlarge Font](#)
-  [Decrease Font](#)
-  [del.icio.us](#)
-  [Digg it](#)

More News

- [State might realign street](#)
- [Café feeds the body, mind](#)
- [News Briefs](#)

Advertisements

Most Popular

- [Stories](#)
- [Emailed](#)

Last 24 Hours

- [Two West Johnston students dead in wreck](#)
- [Former band director charged with sex offense](#)
- [Smithfield dedicates greenway](#)
- [State might realign street](#)
- [Former Johnston teacher arrested on child porn charges](#)

Last 7 Days

- [State takes doctor's license](#)
- [Former Johnston teacher arrested on child porn charges](#)
- [Crime Report](#)
- [Former band director faces sex charges](#)
- [Clients suing Hall, banks](#)

Last 24 Hours

1. [Two teens found guilty in 2008 vandalism](#)
2. [Smithfield dedicates greenway](#)
3. [Day-care debate suggests divide](#)
4. [Honor Roll: Smithfield-Selma High School](#)

building near downtown.

The after-school program, which has one staffer and 15 volunteers in Clayton, has even collected a 20-student waiting list. The Clayton program focuses primarily on third- to fifth-graders, mentoring them in academics, exercise and nutrition.

"If we can help these 40 kids, get them boosted up and get them a good start into the system, then you get another 40, you're talking about 80 kids in two years that might have dropped through the system," Sims said.

Wiles said the daily meal for her daughter makes life easier, and she thinks the program gives good life lessons.


"Hearing about healthy eating habits is important for all kids," she said.

Sims said the program emphasizes eating from a diversity of food groups, especially greens. The program also boasts "Study Island," a computer-based learning system aimed to improve end-of-grade test scores.

The director hopes kids' time with the program will link good eating with good grades. He wants them to "understand how important a role nutrition plays in part of them being able to excel academically," he said.

"They get the fuel to accomplish these mental tasks from the hot, nutritious meal that is provided each day, and the physical-activity component adds fun to the program," said Earline Middleton, vice president of agency services and programs for the Food Bank. "The added bonus is that parents who might be working late or working two jobs do not have to worry about an evening meal."

andy.kenney@nando.com or 919-836-5758

© Copyright 2010, The News & Observer Publishing Company
A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company 

Last 7 Days

1. [Clients suing Hall, banks](#)
2. [New UNC student leader has Johnston County ties](#)
3. [Two teens found guilty in 2008 vandalism](#)
4. [Incumbent registrar of deeds faces challenger](#)
5. [Honor Roll: Smithfield-Selma High School](#)

[Debt Relief Services](#)

Credit card debt relief with debt consolidation & counseling services

www.DebtReductionServices.org

[Buy Stocks - \\$4 Fee at ShareBuilder](#)

No Account or Investment Minimums. \$50 Account Bonus! Don't miss out.

www.sharebuilder.com

[Need Affordable Health Care?](#)

Get Affordable Health Insurance Quotes Online - Rates from \$30 / Month

Affordable-Health-Insurance.org

Ads by Yahoo!