



# Operation Destiny Boot Camp



Campers get special treat - lunch at California Dreaming restaurant. See pictures on 2,



Motivational Speaker Cheryl Littlejohn uplifts and inspires participants in Operation Destiny Boot Camp with her life story, Please see story on Page 3.



Campers put on a performance for their family members and friends on the final day of the camp. Please see the pictures on 7.

July 9, 2015

Priceless

Charleston, S.C.

Volume 2 No. 2

## STEAM component stressed in Boot Camp

*Campers exposed to technology*

Technology is an ever growing part of our 21st century. During this camp, we explored, researched, recovered, and added to our education through this fascinating tool. As we include more and more technology into our every-

*As we include more and more technology into our everyday lives, our skills needed for future careers will become stronger and help to reach our goals.*

day lives, our skills needed for future careers will become stronger and help to reach our goals. Although science and technology are key components of STEAM, without the creative thinking of ENGINEERING, neither one could come into total view. Curiosity see STEAM on 5



Students were encouraged to use their imagination to build their cars.

## Come on, let's celebrate! Etiquette, manners are vital tools



Motivational speaker Cheryl Littlejohn and students celebrated at the culmination event held for participants at Operation Destiny Boot Camp. Please see a feature on Littlejohn on Page 3.

Far too many road blocks stare our young African American males in the face. Too many lack the social etiquette and manners necessary to navigate the difficult passage to manhood. As adolescents they are developing the skills to become successful adults. However, with the vast number of them coming from single-parent homes they are at-risk of becoming statistics of poverty, lack of education and entering the prison pipeline.

The Operation Destiny Boot Camp, which recently concluded at Burke High School, made an effort to stem this growing trends. A genuine effort was made to attack the problems that so many of our young adults run into prior to reaching adulthood. While the camp included both males and females, the focus rests squarely on the males. It is a challenge for all in attracting mature males to help the developing male populations to measure up to the standards by which they will be held accountable. Getting our young males to understand the constantly shifting social norms will indeed take a major effort on everyone's



**Sam Davis**  
From The Sideline

part. For a case in point, let us look at the demographics of the camp participants. Of the 27 males enrolled in the Operation Destiny Boot Camp, only one came from a home that is led by both parents. The vast majority came from single-parent, female-led households. That in itself is a tragedy. Even worse, few maintained healthy relationships with adult, gainfully employed, males. With that said, is there any question why so many of our young African American boys aren't falling victim to the school-to-prison pipeline?

Something has to be done. African Americans need to take on this issue head-on. Parents and children need to be held accountable, but most importantly our African-American youth must be taught the skills and be given the tools necessary to help themselves. In other words they too must be willing to pull themselves up from the bootstraps. Under the direction of Executive Coaching Enterprises, the youth who participated in the three week camp were afforded that opportunity.

see Manners on 2

## Cannon: Camp was transformational

*Boot Camp left its mark on students and adults*

By Sam Davis

When Maurice Cannon accepted the position of principal at Burke Middle/High School, he knew there would be challenges that he had to face. Cannon decided to attack them head-on. Among the most pressing was a declining student population and a base from which his school could draw students.

However, in his five years in the position, he has done much to change the school's culture. Realizing that most of his students come from female-led, single parent homes, Cannon has worked to establish a support network for his students. The

school has a Gentleman's Club on campus, a step team, an active student government, strong athletics teams and a mentoring program.

"I pride myself in promoting the school as a family," he said. "Whatever happens to one of our students affects us all." Cannon has also been proactive in building relationships between the young men in his school and adult males by attracting highly qualified



**Maurice Cannon**

male teachers, staff members and coaches.

Now in his 10th year at Burke, first as a teacher, later as

see Cannon on 8

## Parents, students say camp was fun

By Sam Davis

Campers at Operation Destiny Boot Camp didn't know what to expect when they signed up to attend the three-week camp which recently ended. Many came merely as a means to recover grades from the regular academic school year. But what they got was a huge surprise to them and their parents.

Twins Elijah and Elisha Patterson said they weren't thrilled about the idea of attending the camp. However, both said attending was probably the most gratifying educational experience they have ever had.

"I really didn't look forward to attending it at first," said Elijah. "I didn't know what to expect.

I thought it was going to be three weeks of boring stuff like we have in regular school. But it was fun and exciting. We got to do so many fun things. The coaches worked with us and we got a chance to see them on another level. We had a chance to see them as they are and relate to them."

see Parents on 2



Parents and students enjoyed the celebration that ended Operation Destiny Boot Camp.



# Manners

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While some people might make excuses for this rapidly developing demographic, we all can help in reversing these trends. It is just as easy to erase negative streotypes as it is to continue to promote them. However, an attitude change is necessary before one can begin on that path. The motivational words of Cheryl Littlejohn helped this cause tremendously. The energy that comes from her was impactful and resulted in many attitudes chang-ing.

I once heard an old adage that young people would do well to adopt for themselves. It says: “Manners will get you where money won’t”. Over the years I have found this statement to be true. You don’t have to be blessed financially to be nice and courte-ous. All it takes is a desire to bet-ter oneself and a willingness to be positive in all your interactions with others.

To understand manners one must know when and how to use them. To know when and how to use your manners one must have an understanding of society’s right and wrongs, appropriate and inap-propriate behavior, code shifting and when certain things are acceptable and unacceptable and when they are not. In short, one has to be able to comprehend the situation and be able to act accord-ingly.

There is nothing wrong with dressing appropriately and speaking proper English. Today’s young folks seem to have lost

track of those skills. As a child, I was told it is polite to say “yes sir, no ma’am, please and thank you”. Far too many of our youth are not taught those skills while they are in their formative years.

Because of the lack of positive male role models in the lives of many of our young males, many of them look up to sports start, celebrities, entertain-

ers and those in their neighbor-hoods who may not be the best example for them to follow. Many of these role models are not posi-tive. Therefore they must be taught to change their per-ception of what makes a “Man”. They must learn to put Character over cash, Integrity above Flash and the Realtiy of the Hard Work it takes to be a Positive Man.

Our young males must be

*“Our young males must be willing to break out of their shells by having their self-esteem and confidence boost-ed. These traits will transfer into the real world and to their homes.”*

willing to break out of their shells by having their self-esteem and confidence boosted. These traits will transfer into the real world and to their homes. Yet, it will take the efforts of dedicated, posivite male mentor, family and community support and the com-mitment of the young men them-selves for them to succeed. A core system of values are also necessary for the improve-ment of this group as a whole. Among them are **Fairness** - in our dealings with others and ourselves. Ensuring that to the best of our

**see Manners on 7**



ODBC participants were given a chance to practice their social etiquette when they were treated to a meal at California Dreaming Restaurant.



# Littlejohn uses skills learned from mentor to help kids

Gastonia, N.C. native says Pat Summit helped her develop leadership skills with hard work

By Sam Davis

It's been more than 28 years since Cheryl Littlejohn played her last basketball game in a Univ. of Tennessee jersey. However, the life lessons Littlejohn learned from her college coach linger on and are among the driving forces behind her today.

Littlejohn played center on the Volunteers' first NCAA championship team in 1987. For Summit, it was the first of many national titles. But for Littlejohn it helped catapult her into a successful coaching career - and now life as



Cheryl Littlejohn

a thriving consultant, motivational speaker and advocate for the education of under-served children. Littlejohn said she would not be where she is today or have accomplished as much as she has without the support, encouragement and drive instilled in her by Summit. "Even today, I would run through a brick wall for her," Littlejohn said. "Any of us who played for her would." Littlejohn said things weren't always that way, especially after she first arrived in Knoxville. "I remember calling



Cheryl Littlejohn (#44) poses with the Univ. of Tennessee's first national championship team.

my mom and telling her 'this woman is trying to kill us,' Littlejohn said. "My mom was very calm and said to me 'how many people has she already killed?' She told me if Coach Summit asked me jump off a bridge I should ask her: which one in Knoxville? After that I got off the telephone and applied myself." And although the Volunteers went on to win the national championship, that wasn't the most impressive thing that Summit did for her. "She made a promise to my mother that I would graduate," Littlejohn said. "And although I didn't graduate with a 4.0 GPA, I was happy to walk across that stage." Growing up in a housing project in Gastonia, Littlejohn said things were tight financially for her family. Consequently, her exposure to the world was limited. But her third grade teacher helped open up her world by introducing the class to Paris. "We had the Eiffel Tower in our classroom," she said. "Our whole classroom was filled with land-

marks and things from Paris. I was able to be in Paris although I never left my neighborhood." Littlejohn, working with Executive Coaching, Inc., is hoping to light a torch for the kids who are enrolled in the company's Operation Destiny Book Camp, which was recently held at Burke Middle-High School in Charleston, S.C. *"We had the Eiffel Tower in our classroom. Our whole classroom was filled with landmarks and things from Paris. I was able to be in Paris although I never left my neighborhood."*

Explorer's Camp over the next three weeks. The camp is open to students who recently finished first and second grade in elementary schools in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School system that receive Title I funds. Those are schools where more than 50 percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. The program is being offered at 10 sites in Forsyth County. Thus far, nearly 1800 students have

enrolled in the program, which gets underway on Monday. Students in the program will receive instruction in Math and Reading during the morning session and will have art, music and physical activity in the afternoon. First grade students have a built-in science component where they will experiment with robotics. Littlejohn said she looks forward to the challenge of opening the mindset of the students in the camp. "You have to get hyped for our babies," Littlejohn said. "You have to get into character and at the end of three weeks you must have had an impact. You have to inspire the minds of kids who don't have hope. We have to transfer our spirit into the kids. We have to create culture and atmosphere in the classrooms." Although the program begins on Monday, Littlejohn said there is still openings left for a few more children. "We don't want to leave out anyone who can benefit from being in the program," she said. **see Littlejohn on 4**



Coach Littlejohn motivates during Professional Development.





# Littlejohn

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have made an effort to reach out to the community. We have gone to the hood and stood on the block asking parents to send their kids to us.”

The fact that Executive Coaching has been able to connect with the community helped sell the local school system on the company.

had many of the components we were looking for, but Executive Coaching brought something special. They were able to reach out to the community.”

One of the major emphasis of the program is to make it fun for the participants. “When you make it fun the kids learn,” Littlejohn said. “We want them to be excited about being here and eager to come every day.

“Sometimes you don’t win the game in regulation,” said Littlejohn, comparing education to sports. “Sometimes you’ve got to go into overtime to win. That’s what I told our coaches (teachers) who will provide instruction. This is overtime and we have to win. Sometimes all a

child needs is a cheerleader or someone who can provide inspiration.

“We want them to be motivated to achieve, but that’s not our main goal,” Littlejohn continued. “We want them to have Inspiration. Motivation is temporary, but inspiration lasts a lifetime.”

Littlejohn spent two days with the program’s (coaches) instructors. While the program will have as one of its chief goal to decrease the gap in reading and math scores among students who come from Title I schools to others in the county, she says the human element is very important.

“You don’t know what some of these have to go through before they arrive at school everyday,” she said. “We have to make sure that the rooms are exciting and engaging. We have to let the children know that we care about them and we want them to learn and have fun. Some of these parents and students have no hope. We have to let them know if they can look up, they can get up.”

**Cheryl Littlejohn celebrates as she and Coach Pat Summit watch the Lady Vols.**



# Parents

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Elisha echoed the same sentiments.

After that first day we all looked forward to coming every day,” he said. “The activities were focused on us. We got a chance to do a lot of fun things, like building cars with legos, learning how to be cooks and chefs and going to a fancy restaurant.”

Carlette Patterson, the twins’ mother said she noticed a change in her boys’ attitudes.

“I definitely saw a change in their attitudes and behaviors,” she said. “It was good for them to be in a summer program with so much structure and they seemed to really enjoy themselves. Hopefully they will do it again next year and more kids will participate.”

Latasha Williams, who had three children, Amanda Williams, Uniqua Williams and Demetric Williams in the camp, said the experi-

*Coach (Cheryl) Littlejohn did a great job of motivating them to strive to reach goals. She brought a lot of excitement to the kids and I really appreciated that.”*

**- Latasha Williams**

ence helped her children to become more enthused about learning.

“It was awesome and very inspiring,” she said. “It was very encouraging to the kids. They did a lot of things to make the kids feel like they are important. Coach (Cheryl) Littlejohn did a great job of motivating them to strive to reach goals. She brought a lot of excitement to the kids and I really appreciated that.”

Like Ms. Patterson, Ms. Williams said she noticed a change in attitude with her children.

“They are a lot more malleable,” she said. “My son is acting the way I would like to see him. I came to see him one day at the camp and he was really on task. That’s not the way he is most times during regular school. He’s usually a class clown, but I could see the growth in him – he was acting very responsibly.”

Demetric said the coaches at the camp touched a chord within him.

“The good thing was the fact that they could relate to us,” he said. “That helped me understand what it



**Jaretta Green and her daughter Renee’sheia Green said the camp helped helped Renee’sheia gain confidence.**

means to be responsible. It also taught me how to talk to parents and peers.”

Jeretta Green, mother of Renee’sheia Green, said exposure to creative outlets was very important to her daughter.

“They made the experience exciting,” Ms. Green said. Renee’sheia said the camp gave her a chance to express her talent as a dancer.

“I want to be a dancer when I grow up and the camp brought some of the shyness out of me,” she said. “I was able to perform in front of my peers and they accepted me and my talent.”

Nekikee DeCosta had two sons and a daughter (Jonathan Howard, Antonio Bennett and Rain Bennett) in the camp. She said it took some of the burden off of her of having a safe, learning, environment for her children.

“It was a great influence on them,” Ms. DeCosta said. “It was good for them to get out of the environment where we live and have positive role models,” she said. “Hopefully it will get them ready for next school year and give them a boost along the way.”

Venittia Howard, mother of camp participant Sharika Howard, said her daughter looked forward to attending the camp every day.

“At first she was sure she would like it, but after those first few days she wanted to come every day. It helped her recover some grades and prepared her for the eighth grade next year. It was good for the kids and it helped a lot of them stay out of trouble. I think it’s a great program and I appreciated my daughter having the opportunity to participate in it.”

Unlike some summer camps, Operation Destiny Boot Camp had an element of structure while also allowing the students to have freedom of expression. That’s what excited Donovan Fulton’s grandmother, Laretha Fulton, and his mother Samantha Fulton.

“The thing that I liked most was the kids didn’t get to do what they wanted to do,” Mrs. Laretha Fulton said. “I thought that it was nice and there was a lot of structure. “

“The camp gave the kids a chance to express themselves in a positive manner,” Ms. Samantha Fulton said. “It gave a lot of them just what they needed – but it was still fun and exciting.”



**Twins Elijah and Elisha Patterson( back) and their mother Carlette Patterson (center front).**

# Oh yes, it is a girl!

*Taking a personal interest in each other was important to Coaches and Campers. Campers, along with officials from Executive Coaching Enterprises, gave Coach Schultz a Baby Shower in anticipation of the arrival of her new daughter.*





# Burke Middle School Summer Camp

## Not just a new beginning, but a promising beginning

**By Doris Twigg**  
Educational Consultant

...“From the Sand Box to the Board Room” is part of the voice message you will hear if you are unable to immediately reach someone on the line at Executive Coaching Enterprises (ECE).

This summer, from June 10 – June 30, the ECE Operation Destiny Boot Camp experience took the Burke Middle School students on the road to prepare them for the “Board Room”. The real life experiences at the camp challenged the campers daily, from 8:00 to 2:00 Monday thru Thursday, to assess where they were going in life and how were they going to get there.

The camp experience, Operation Destiny, afforded them some new challenges to believe in themselves and to consider regularly activating these words in their vocabulary: abilities, brilliance, courage, dreams, energy, future, gifts, humor, inspire, journey, kindness, love, magic, needs, opportunity, potential, questions, respect, success, talent, uniqueness, victories, wonder, eXcellence, youth, and zeal.

These simple “ABC’s” were given by the head coach of the camp, Coach Cheryl Littlejohn; she and the other coaches led the campers to believ-

ing in all the promises and possibilities they hold within themselves.

Head Coach Cheryl Littlejohn, the teacher coaches and the high school and college student coaches led the campers to extend their thoughts and exhibit what they really wanted in life; where they were going; what would it take to get them there and how were they planning to get there. This meant moving beyond the pictures on the display board to the actual experience of planning their future: completion of high school, community or technology school, military service, four year college and beyond. The campers had to plan their future around their vision statement and look at the real world through the eyes of Financial Literacy. Later, they were given time to share their plan of action which they did with pride. The Burke Middle School campers did a great job in meeting this challenge.

Other challenges which the campers met and exceeded their own expectations were character education, teamwork, Fit 4Life, TEAMS integrated mini units (Technology-Engineering-Arts & Athletics-Mathematics-Science) and Banking on my Future/Learn and Earn system. Camp sessions to facilitate these were incorporated into the camp’s daily routine.

The campers looked forward to their daily activities on character building, robotics, African-American history, working together as a team to win a scavenger hunt, performing at Breakfast for Champions or Destiny Café (lunch time), or a cuisine “cook off” exposing campers to foods of other cultures. What a busy schedule!

Although the schedule was rigorous, the Burke Middle School campers rallied for the daily learn and earn “Destiny Dollars” to shop at the camp store, lunch at California Dreaming Restaurant and the culminating performances to show off their inspiring talents to their parents and other visitors. These twelve days of grade recovery and enrichment were well spent with young

campers who attended every day; some campers did not want to miss a day even when they were sick. The differentiated activities enabled each camper to grow and be proud of their daily accomplishments. The camp concluded with Burke Middle School teacher-coaches and campers looking forward to a new school year as well as summer 2016.



Each camper received a basketball to remind them of their commitment to excellence.

## Vision Boards: How do you picture your life?





# Manners

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ability we treat others as we would like to be treated.

**Trustworthiness** - that we build an unimpeachable character and have integrity and do the right thing when no one is looking.

**Citizenship** - realizing that we are part of our communities. We are our community. We will be a positive force in our community and we will improve our community wherever we go.

**Caring** - we workin with our hands, our heads, but especially our hearts. We take ownership of our deeds and we work hard for those we love. We love our community.

**Responsibility** - our word is our bond. If we say it, we do it. If we know we should do it, it's done. We own our obligations. We can be depended upon to complete any task to which we put forth our effort.

**Respect** - of others, of women, of adults, of our school, of our community and of our-

selves. We must counter the negative influences and images our young people are bombarded with on a daily basis. We must show others that everything is not the way it is presented to them in the media, on TV, internet or on the streets. We must enable ourselves and others fo find their own truth and by extension find their true paths.

Finally, we must offer, as did the Operation Destiny Book Camp, the students exposure to things and situations they may not have encountered but will encounter in the future. They must be ready when they come across these situations. They must know what to do and be confident in the doing. For instance, campers were treated to a meal at a restaurant. They were prepped on proper table etiquette.

Knowing how to look good and feel good about themselves is also important. All campers were given personal hygiene kits and taught proper grooming, skills that are sometimes not stressed in low-income homes.



A hairstylist helped campers understand the importance of grooming.

## Grand Performance!



Campers performed for themselves, family and friends at Operation Destiny Boot Camp Celebration, which ended the 12-day camp.



Cannon

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assistant principal before becoming the principal, Cannon said he seen lots of changes in the community and the school.

“We are faced with many of the challenges we see in urban areas throughout the country,” he said. “We have large pockets of students who are living below the poverty level. Many of them have deficiencies in literacy and in numeracy gaps. We see a lot of students in academic courses where they perform below the national averages.

“We find there are also challenges at times with motivating students to be highly engaged in academics,” Cannon added. “We have to provide models that show students how they learn best. Getting them to metacognitively realize that I’m success-

ful when I do this and not successful when I do that provides the motivation for them to understand when I do that the outcome is not going to be good.”

Burke is located just across from Gadsden Green Public Housing. Some 20 percent of the students live there. As the only cen-

*“The coaches weren’t challenged with the burden of getting students ready for a big assessment – that wasn’t a concern. They were really able to facilitate learning and were not being pressured by having a big assessment that they had to prep the students to take. That made it much more organic.”*

- Principal Maurice Cannon

trally located school near downtown Charleston, Cannon said the school’s population has dropped in recent years.

“The school is located in a changing community,” he said. “Downtown now has more of a middle class base. More whites are

for his students. It allowed students to thrive.

“I saw the students and coaches building relationships,” he said. “With students it was fun for them to be in an environment where they could bond with the staff. The coaches weren’t challenged with the burden of getting students ready for a big assessment – that wasn’t a concern. They were really able to facilitate learning and were not being pressured by having a big assessment that

they had to prep the students to take. That made it much more organic.

“The coaches were able to really tap into their talents and be more effective as professionals, rather than being scripted by pacing guidelines,” Cannon added. “The students really bought into it as well. Some of them started out with an attitude of “Oh my gosh I don’t want to be here”, to “I really want to be here and I can wait to see what happens the next day.”

“The camp was able to provide many relationship-building opportunities,” he said. “Primarily, the coaching model builds the relationships that you need for students to learn. We try to make it as organic as possible and model our own actions.”

We pride ourselves on hiring male educators as much as possible. Men are hard to find in the teaching profession, especially beyond just a coaching mold. But we have been successful over the years hiring males. Found that coaches, even the basketball coaches have established relationships between themselves and the students.

There were also many practical applications to hands-on learning during the camp.

“The students got a chance to work



Coaches and campers had a great bonding experience with lunch at California Dreaming.

side-by-side with our cafeteria professionals,” Cannon said. “They only see them in the kitchen working and never get a chance to form a relationship. But the camp gave the students a chance to get to know them. They spent an entire day with them. They had a chance to slice the tomatoes, dice onions, cook tacos and prepare them to go into the oven. They were also able to make salsa. That’s something we don’t see during the regular school day.”

As a whole, Cannon, who obtained his undergraduate degree at South Carolina State and received a Masters degree at The Citadel, said many positives

came from the students participating in Operation Destiny Boot Camp.

“The camp itself was transformational,” he said. “It ignited a spark in the students. They really enjoyed the learning process. It was an excellent investment. We were pushed for time – hopefully in the future they will recognize that and the budgeting for the camp would allow for more time. Typically the camp is designed for six weeks. We were limited and we were not given as much time as they have done in the past – with only three weeks to work with – but it was definitely effective.”



The camp help create dialogue between participants.



Participants in Operation Destiny Boot Camp benefited from their vast experiences, including this trip to California Dreaming Restaurant.