

Parent University

*Lowndes County Schools
Valdosta, Georgia*

District-Level Leadership

Parent University, a half-day series of workshops on a variety of topics for parents, was a collaborative effort between the county school system, Moody Air Force Base's Family Advocacy Center, and various community educators. The short seminars and extended sessions increased parents' understanding of parent-child interaction skills, child rearing, and the *No Child Left Behind* Act requirements and responsibilities for parents.

Originally, Moody Air Force Base and one elementary school in the county implemented the Parent University to support the school's families. Because of overwhelming interest in the event, the superintendent, Dr. Steve Smith, opened the program to all families in all Lowndes County schools. "I am very impressed with the turn-out. I have been very pleased with Parent University," remarked Smith. Approximately 150 parents and other caregivers benefited from the seminars this year.

Parents arrived at the event, held at Lowndes High School, early enough to enjoy a continental breakfast before the first session. The district superintendent delivered a motivating keynote address. Afterward, the Moody Base Commander spoke about parenting. For the next three hours, parents enjoyed participating in either three short sessions or two extended sessions on topics of interest to their particular needs. They received a handbook or CD-Rom from each session plus handouts to take home with them. The parents reviewed this information at home with their child.

At the end of the morning, parents completed evaluations of the program. As one

parent described, "I took away a better understanding of what it is like to grow up in this day and time and what my child's age group will be going through in a few years. I learned to be more patient." All attendees received certificates of completion for their participation.

A major challenge for this year's Parent University came from a new online registration process that was added to the paper registration. Kinks in the online program caused confusion for event organizers. The next Parent University will fine-tune the process by devising a program to download online registrations to a more efficient database.

In spite of the registration technical difficulties, the Parent University successfully brought the home, school, and community closer together. Everyone benefited from this positive event. District staff are excited to know that next year this will be an even bigger and better endeavor.

*Ann Abel, Cheryl Acree, Becky Colson, Tia Heard,
Parent Involvement Team
aabel@lowndes.k12.ga.us
(229) 245-2250, ext. 134*