



**Web site aims to prevent dropouts, steer kids to careers  
Coaches needed for Futures for Kids organization**

By SARAH NEWELL

Record Staff Writer

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HICKORY - Some students may not have any interest in reading, science or math class. But give them the opportunity to ask questions about being a NASCAR mechanic, developing computer software or being a cosmetologist, and their interest is sparked.

"I have kids in my class that are the future dropouts. They don't pay attention to anything that you teach them. But if you let them get on to the Futures for Kids Web site and get to actually ask some of these people about being a mechanic and what they want to know, their faces just light up," said Leslie Farris, the career explorations teacher at Jacobs Fork Middle School.

Farris is talking about a Web site designed by Futures for Kids, an organization that started in Catawba County four years ago and has spread throughout the state. Business leaders sign up to be career coaches on the Web site. The leaders can correspond with students anywhere in the state who have questions about their profession. The questions and ensuing dialogue is posted on the Web for other students to read.

"This Web-based program is designed to give kids relevance for why they are in school and taking classes. Kids take a 39-question career quiz to help give them a starting point for a few careers they might be interested in," said Susan Milliken, director of Futures for Kids. "The top careers kids want to be in today are models, video game creators, cosmetologists, lawyers and plastic surgeons. We need people in our community to help steer these kids to careers."

The program is geared toward eighth-graders, with many students continuing to use the program as they move into high school. Currently, 4,700 students in Catawba County use the program. To learn more about the program or to be a career coach, go to [www.f4k.org](http://www.f4k.org).

[snewell@hickoryrecord.com](mailto:snewell@hickoryrecord.com) | 322-4510 x 5408 or 304-6915