



Futures for Kids helps students decide on careers

By David Wall/Richmond County Daily Journal
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More than 1,100 local students are using the Internet to help decide on a career path. These students are among 50,000 other students in North Carolina that have registered to use a Web-based career source program known as Futures for Kids.

F4K received a \$5,000 grant from The Cole Foundation to assist in motivating students to stay in school and prepare for their future. F4K has helped students get a closer look at possible careers through the Internet-based career source Web site for the past five years.

"We are hopeful that by providing useful real-world information to these young students, we can have a positive influence on their future," Susan Milliken, F4K executive director said. "The grant will be utilized in Richmond County to expand recruiting efforts for more career coaches and to train school personnel on how to use the web-based programming."

The F4K program has a focus group of eighth grade students and a goal to "bridge the gap between the hopes and dreams of our students and the workforce development needs in our community," the Web site states.

"One of our first donations came from Progress Energy," Milliken said. "They made an initial donation of \$45,000 to assist in the implementation of this program in 11 North Carolina counties, including Richmond."

Based on the premise that kids with a plan are more successful in school, F4K uses business and community support to create an online career connection for students and help them understand the relationship between school and their future. Once students have completed an interest inventory that provides personalized career suggestions, they can use F4K to take the next step and begin exploring those careers, discovering which ones interest them and how to get there.

The Richmond County contact for this program from the Richmond County school system is Career Technical Coordinator Sharon Johnson.

"Many of my students have really been inspired after finding a job in F4K and said now they know what they need to do to achieve the career," Career Development Coordinator for Richmond County Schools Sharon Johnson said. "A lot of our junior high school students are already familiar with the site. We want to see all Richmond County students have the opportunity to experience this for themselves."

F4K brings together school districts, students, and industries to help students expand their knowledge of the workplace. Each student uses the Internet-based program to explore possible career paths and begin career planning. The program has information on topics such as average earnings, what colleges can prepare the student for the career, what type of work is done in the career and what high school courses would help prepare the students for the career.

After exploring careers, students can be matched with a career coach, an individual working in the field who can give the student real-world information about the career.

For more information log onto the Web site www.f4k.org.