

The Cultural Arts Division of the Waukegan Park District is seeking artists and crafters for the Dandelion Wine Fine Arts Festival to be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. June 7 in Bowen Park. The festival is held in honor of Ray Bradbury and his book "Dandelion Wine." Details, (847) 360-4740.

Send us news or calendar items about events in Waukegan, Zion, Park City and Great Lakes today! E-mail: nsforum@scn1.com.

# High expectations

## Academy brings God into the classroom

By Judy Masterson  
JMASTERTON@SCN1.COM

WAUKEGAN — Shelia Daniels Academy Principal Deborah Stackhouse wears the message of her school on a thin gold chain around her neck: Try God.

The small private Christian school, where kids learn Latin as a means to improving their verbal skills, is all about bringing God into the classroom and sending him back out into the world again — shining forth from the lives of students.

In Mrs. Devynne Gowie's class, God comes for the morning Bible study and stays all day. He listens in silence as fourth- and fifth-graders discuss the startling conversion of the Apostle Paul.

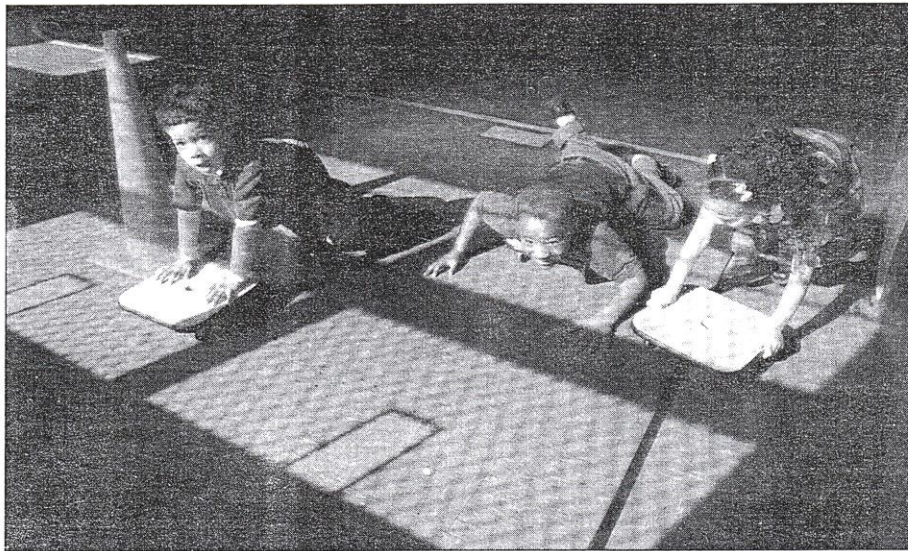
"What we're learning about Paul, we're bridging into our own lives," Gowie said. "We're talking about what the Holy Spirit can do for us. We're using Biblical examples to find ways to live our lives today."

Shelia Daniels, at 2313 Washington St., Waukegan, is one of more than 3,000 member schools in Association of Christian Schools International devoted to "embracing and pursuing the mind of Christ."

"What we have to offer you don't find in public school or even at a lot of other Christian-based schools," said the softspoken Gowie, who keeps her students in line with side glances.

The school, which charges an average annual tuition of \$3,000, was founded by Sign of the Dove Church in 1989, which is pastored by Stackhouse and her husband, the Rev. Harry Stackhouse.

"It was our wish to be able to give



Kindergarten students (left to right) Lamont Taylor, 5, Omari Fleming, 5, and Maya Dewey, 5, play with skateboards during gym class at Shelia Daniels Academy in Waukegan.

Biblical instruction as well as academic instruction," Deborah Stackhouse said.

The academy is named in honor of a young occupational therapist, a member of Sign of the Dove, who worked in the public school system, and who died suddenly in 1999 after a diagnosis of Asian flu. The 26-year-old Daniels left a husband and two-month-old baby.

"Shelia had a love for children and a love for education," Stackhouse said. "She believed children should be well-rounded academically as well as spiritually."

Housed in a former church building, the school, which has an enrollment of 82, was bustling on Tuesday morning. Kindergartners, all who can read, according to Stackhouse, were bouncing through jumping jacks and otherwise exercising their volunteer teacher, Mrs. Lee. Preschoolers including Jaylah Turner and Jabari Brown, both 5, impressed a visitor with a demonstration of their reading skills, their eyes large as they related the ad-

ventures of frisky Tip the pup.

Jabari's dad, Lawrence Brown, called the academy "very nurturing."

"They have very high expectations," he said.

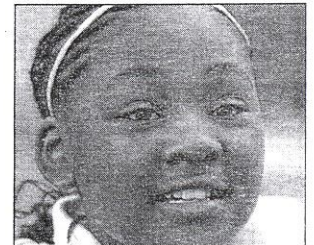
First-graders were sailing through parts of a sentence, with the help of Shurley Grammar. Seventh- and eighth-graders had just finished a science experiment and were recording their findings. The room smelled slightly like sulphur. The academy uses the Bible-based

## FUND-RAISER SUNDAY

Shelia Daniels Academy will hold its seventh annual fashion show fund-raiser at 1:30 p.m. Sunday at Rosalind Franklin University, 3333 Green Bay Road, North Chicago. The school will also hold an open house at 7 p.m. April 22. For information on either event, call (847) 263-8147 or visit [www.sheliadanielsca.org](http://www.sheliadanielsca.org).

THOMAS DELANY JR. • TDELANY@SCN1.COM

## WHAT STUDENTS HAVE TO SAY



"This school is advanced. We're prepared for high school — and college."

LYDIA HENRY, 11,  
OF WAUKEGAN,  
SIXTH GRADE



"One day I forgot to bring my lunch and a teacher gave me hers. It's like a big family here."

LEXIE PHILLIPS, 11,  
OF ZION,  
SIXTH GRADE

"A Reason for Science" curriculum.

Stackhouse noted that the school has helped students who have fallen behind in public school.

"This school is advanced," said sixth-grader Lydia Henry. "We're prepared for high school — and college."

Lexy Phillips, also in sixth grade, reported her satisfaction. "One day I forgot to bring my lunch and a teacher gave me hers," she said. "It's like a big family here."

But despite its success, Shelia Daniels Academy, like many small, private schools, struggles to keep its doors open.

"Money is our biggest challenge," Stackhouse said.

Ken Smitherman, Association of Christian Schools president, said both families and staff make sacrifices to operate schools on less than a third of the \$10,000 national average for per-pupil public education.

"It's the unbelievably wonderful things that are happening in schools that by all right and reason

shouldn't be in operation that is keeping them open," Smitherman said. "With everything going on right now, even somewhat affluent families cannot afford \$300 a month. Our teachers earn just 60 percent of what public school teachers earn. We feel it's a shame that families cannot choose where they believe is the best opportunity for their kids to learn and allow the dollars to flow there."