

SELLING THE SCHOOLS AT THE CAPITOL

If the key to learning is doing, the general education development (GED) class at Boys, Girls, Adults Community Development Center will get an A for the chapter on civic engagement.

Nearly 30 adults, including the GED class, a collaborative effort with Phillips Community College, journeyed to the state Capitol to lobby for a batch of school-improvement bills pushed by the Arkansas Citizens First Congress. The GED

instructor, Mrs. Lillie Miller, a member of Concerned Citizens of Marvell, took the class to the Capitol, where they lunched with legislators and lobbied them on behalf of the school bills.



Mrs. Miller addresses the schools' needs to lawmakers and others at the Capitol

The Citizens First Congress, a statewide consortium of citizens groups, organized Arkansas Opportunity to Learn Lobby Day. The bills appropriate several million dollars for after-school, youth development and summer literacy programs for low-income and rural school students, reform school discipline laws and require schools to have parent-friendly parent-involvement programs and to get parents to acknowledge them.

In the three weeks after the lobbying, most of the bills moved out of committees to the House and Senate floor. An appropriation to set up a pilot program on school breakfast nutrition backed by the citizen lobbyists was signed into law last week.

"We must do whatever we can to save our schools in Marvell," said Mrs. Miller, who taught 39 years in the schools. "One way to do that is to show up and show out, and let our legislators know that we need them to work with us to save the schools."



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