

PUTTING THE FUN IN LEARNING

"Summertime, and the learnin' is easy." Well, maybe not so much easy as fun, if you're involved in the Freedom School in Marvell operated by the Boys, Girls, Adults Community Development Center in collaboration with the Marvell-Elaine schools, the Children's Defense Fund and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

This is the fifth year of the Freedom School, a day camp for more than 50 children in kindergarten and grade school that gets high marks from children, parents and education professionals for the advancement in learning and social achievement that occur in the six-week program.



Eddie Taylor mentors children at the Marvell-Elaine Elementary School

The camp is based on the Mississippi Freedom Schools of the civil-rights era but enhanced by educational strategies developed by the Children's Defense Fund that instill a love of reading and learning in at-risk children. The children learn from a network of African-Americans, who are both mentors and role models. This year and next year, the program at the Marvell-Elaine Elementary School is funded by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation as part of the Arkansas Grade-Level Reading Campaign.

Freedom School disrupts the normal loss of knowledge during the summer break and also makes youngsters yearn to read and learn, enhances their self-esteem and teaches them how to handle life's daily problems, like conflict and disappointment. Young scholars who are surrounded by and learn from dynamic young people want to emulate them.

"We know from experience that the summer program makes a difference-and a lasting difference- in the lives and attitudes of youngsters because it improves their reading efficiency and promotes group and physical activity," said Eddie Taylor, a senior at Arkansas State University who is one of the BGA mentors. "Freedom school encourages intergenerational learning. Every community can use it."



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