

*One for the angels***Good conduct rewarded at Jasper Middle School**

By Jeff Warren

Used to be when you acted out in school you walked that long, lonely mile to the principal's office. And you got to traipse it by yourself unless a teacher towed you by the ear.

But when you were good, you got nothing. That is starting to change. Friday afternoon, October 20, Jasper Middle School unleashed a festival of fun, a bust-out bash to celebrate students who maintained a perfect record of good conduct through the school year's first nine-week grading period.

Dubbed the *Jasper Middle School Principal's Cookout and Behavior Celebration*, the event took place on the school's football field. As *Big & Rich* and other recorded singers throbbed heavy bass from a public address system, middle schoolers thronged the food table for hot dog's and cold drinks, tossed frisbees and footballs, slipped down an inflatable slide the size of a moving truck and bounced themselves toward exhaustion on the cushioned floor of a blow-up air castle.

The point is to provoke good behavior in school through positive reinforcement. "A lot of middle schools are now doing things similar to this," said Principal Steve McDaniel. He credits Assistant Principal Neil Howell for driving the new program since the start of the school year. A veteran educator



Good kids rule!—A sampling of Jasper Middle Schoolers celebrating nine weeks of excellent behavior during a principal-hosted bash last Friday. Almost half the school qualified to participate by their excellent conduct record.

school will be out here."

Students are not the only ones excited about the program. Teachers and staff are celebrating too. McDaniel said the positive reinforcement program has shown obvious results.

"We've about cut our referrals to the office in half," he said. "We're excited about that. We're just real proud of the kids. The vast majority of our kids do what they're asked to do, and they behave very well."

Students registered as they entered the football field for

Kirchoff and Frito Lay District Sales Leader Michael Stewart combined efforts to arrange the computer donation with backing from their companies.

Other sponsors joining the celebration or contributing prizes included: the Georgia Forestry Commission; the Pickens County Sheriff's Office; Bojangles; Starbucks; Kroger; Speedburger; Movie Gallery; Quickburger; Captain D's; Kentucky Fried Chicken; the Little Flower Hair Studio; Tafo Bell; Lexus Nails; Carmike Cinemas; Jasper Banking Company; Crescent Bank; Community Bank of Pickens County; the Blue Ridge Scenic Railroad; Dairy Queen.

On-campus sponsors of the happening, the committee of school staffers who worked the positive reinforcement concept into reality and recruited sponsors for the event included: Leigh McClain; Paula Adams; Ann Roper; Holly Salazar; Melissa Weeks; Keith Petty; Anita Walker; Robin Burch; Lydia Waters; Pam Sheriff.

School officials said Jasper Middle School's Parent Teacher Organization also deserves special thanks.

Assistant Principal Howell said the future of Jasper Middle School promises further innovation for the good-behavior program. As planned, *Phase II* is slated to include "Dragon Cards," credit-card-like plastic good for on-campus perks to students who earn the cards with their conduct. "It reflects their good behavior," explained English teacher Keith Petty.

Dragon cards are to be issued halfway through the nine-week grading period. Howell said the idea behind the cards is to keep students motivated along the way and not just holding out for the big bash at the end of the nine weeks.

And to think we were good for nothing (so to speak).



Assistant Principal Neil Howell (Left) and Principal Steve McDaniel (Right) flank Jasper Middle School student Shanna Crook, lucky winner of the \$500 computer system given away at the good-conduct good time.

from the Rockdale County school system, Howell is new this year to Pickens County.

McDaniel said his assistant principal began the year calling middle schoolers to assemblies by grade level, where Howell explained the workings of the new behavior reward system. With a PowerPoint presentation, he lined out the program.

Each student begins with a score of 100, a perfect conduct score. They carry a "behavior card" at all times. The card is their personal conduct record where demerits are marked for misbehavior. Any demerit received takes away from that perfect 100 they started with.

But malefactors may receive redemption. By entering into a "behavior contract" with the teacher who issued the demerit, students can restore themselves to good standing. None are beyond salvation.

Howell stressed it is the student's responsibility for making a move to get out of the doghouse. "The kid must initiate the contract," Howell stated. "The kid has to be responsible enough to go to the teacher."

By way of atonement, behavior contracts usually call for academic work assigned by the teacher in their own subject area, Howell explained. But sometimes, he said, a teacher chooses to assign an exercise that concentrates more on correcting the problem behavior.

The choice is the teacher's, allowing each some creativity, Howell said. The teacher and student agree to the terms of the contract and cooperate carrying it out. The great thing is you don't have to be perfect (only redeemed) to rejoice on celebration day.

"These are ones that have no demerits or they may have re-earned some points," said Principal McDaniel, surveying a joyous ocean of students from the football stands the day of the cookout. "About half the

prize drawings the rest of the afternoon. Prizes included: University of Georgia hats autographed by UGA Head Coach Mike Richt; tickets to roll on the Blue Ridge Scenic Railroad; seats at the Falcons-Saints game; a DVD player; Dairy Queen coupons granting the lucky bearer a full-meal deal with sundae.

The grand prize drawing occurred at 3 p.m. when student Shanna Crook won a full computer system valued at \$500. Wal-Mart Ellijay Manager Tom



Win one for the slipper!—Having proven themselves by nine weeks of good conduct, middle school students enjoy their reward.