

Albany Early College gets gift

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ALBANY — Albany Early College, an education initiative of the Dougherty County School System, The Board of Regents and Albany State University, received a gift of about 300 books Monday from members of Leadership Albany.

According to Barbara Harvey, AEC principal, about the half the paperbacks were new and half were “gently used.” Content of the books ranged from literary classics to math, science and other topics. “We’re overwhelmed that Leadership Albany would care so much about our school,” Harvey said. “The books are a welcome addition to our library.”

Albany Early College, located on the ASU campus, was started in 2008 as an initiative to help promising, but not necessarily high-achieving, students in the Dougherty County system attend and graduate college. The first AEC class was made up of seventh graders and each year a new group of seventh graders is added. Harvey said that of the original 60 students, 47 are still a part of the program.

“We’ve had kids move away or leave for a variety of other reasons,” she said, “but overall I think there’s been a very high retention.” Harvey said that, as a group, AEC students have a greater than 90 percent success rate. As defined by the school, that means that more than 90 percent are scoring higher than 800 on the Georgia CRCT as well as the EOCT.

Before being accepted at AEC, students are made aware they will be expected to work harder than those in the general educational system and must also do well academically. Applicants must compose an essay, stating in 250 words or more why they would like to attend Albany Early College. In addition, applicants must have no college graduates in their immediate family.

According to Harvey, successful AEC students can take college courses at ASU as early as the 11th grade, and a number of the “up and coming” juniors will take classes next year.

Tenth-grader, Kierston Bolston has been at Early College “since Day 1,” and has set her eye on a law career. “It’s a great opportunity for someone from a low-income family who wants to have the chance to live a full life and attend college at an early age” Bolston said. “I’ve wanted to be a lawyer since the fifth grade.” Bolston makes As with a few Bs and plans to attend UCLA.

Kewana Jackson said she had several choices which included the PAL program or moving to Tallahassee. In the end, she chose AEC.

“I want to be a pediatric psychiatrist,” Jackson said. “I really like kids, and I know that sometimes they just need to talk with professional people who understand their issues.”

Leadership Albany, the local group which provided the gift of books, is an organization dedicated to educating a new “class” of business or organizational leaders each year. The primary purpose of the classes, said Dr. Lane Price, a member of Leadership Albany Class of 2011, is to learn about 10 local issues. According to Price, AEC was one of the issues studied this year, along with local housing, medical care, industry and others.

“We were so extremely impressed with Albany Early College we decided to make it our end-of-the-year project,” Price said. “The book gift was a part of that. In addition, Leadership Albany has been helping the school in a number of other ways, including tutoring.

“The students were so excited about the books and the help we’ve given them,” Price said, “And we were excited, too.”