

## Summer program teaches and expands horizons

### Rotary aims to enrich teens

By ANNE WOODMAN  
CORRESPONDENT

CARY — Five teenaged boys gathered at a Cary SunTrust bank branch on a hot summer morning to discuss personal finances.

No video games, TVs or cell phones were in sight.

But bank assistant vice president Nancy Conklin did remember to bring a colorful assortment of doughnuts and orange juice before they talked about checking accounts and credit cards.

The boys, ranging in age from 16 to 19, were part of an ambitious summer enrichment program sponsored by the Cary-area Rotary Clubs.

During the school year, the teens live at the Lake Waccamaw Boys and Girls Homes in the Rotary Cottage.

Since the 1950s, various civic organizations have supported the Cottages at the Boys and Girls Homes, a residential community for children who have been neglected or abused, which has an active foster care and adoption program.

The program was the mission of Cary-MacGregor Rotary Club member Owen Robinson, dreamed up about two and a half years ago.

"I heard a lot about the [Ro-

tary] Cottage, but I didn't hear much about the kids in the Cottage — what happens to them when they leave?" Robinson said. "We need to build a support base for them."

For four weeks over the summer, the boys live in an apartment in Cary with their teaching parents, Michael and Gwen Jones.

"This program widens their horizons," Gwen Jones said. "We have eaten new foods, visited a horse farm, learned automotive skills like changing the oil and changing a tire and spent time with children at the Ronald McDonald House.

"They didn't want to leave."

The teenagers were most impressed with a trip to SAS, where they learned about solar panels and saw CEO Jim Goodnight's extensive rock collection.

Rashad Outlaw, 19, enjoyed the tour of the Legislature and swimming lessons at the YMCA.

Matthew Jarman, 16, could not believe how much he did not know about dining etiquette.

Robert Walder, 18, a recent high school graduate, liked all of it. Soon, he will start college at Southeast Community College.

At the bank, Conklin reminded Walder and the others that managing their money when they got out on their own was very important.

"In real life, this is something you will have to deal with," she said. "And it's not every day you have a banker sit down with you and go over everything."

Cary-MacGregor Rotary Club member Owen Robinson spearheaded the summer program because he wondered what would happen to the teens in the Rotary Cottage after they graduated and moved out into the "real world."

Last year, nine girls spent time in Cary. So this year, the

boys had their turn.

Over the course of the four weeks, the boys have visited the Capitol building and taken a tour of downtown Raleigh, seen the Raleigh area museums, taken etiquette lessons at Prestonwood Country Club, gone out on a boat near

Wrightsville Beach, learned about cars and gotten CPR training.

"They'll be going out on their own soon, and responsibility is an important factor of being out on their own," said Cary-Kildaire Rotary Club member Dave Weiss. He said

Cary-area Rotary Clubs raised \$3,500 to give the teens the summer learning opportunity, and they received a matching grant, bringing the total to \$7,000.

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