

The Leader

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Special programs fire thirst for learning

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As public school students approach the 21st Century it is imperative that they are motivated to learn as much as they can about mathematics and the sciences. Elementary to senior high school youngsters in Northwest Philadelphia and beyond are receiving a stimulating academic boost outside the classroom from the special assembly programs by Grand Hank Productions.

The program which uses a multi-media approach to get the students to sing, rap, and play games involving mathematics, science and technology will be coming to many of the local schools during African American History month.

Next Wednesday, Feb. 14 the special assembly will be presented to the students at the Martin Luther King High School.

Then it's off to King cluster elementary schools including Prince Hall on Thursday, Feb. 15, Kinsey in West Oak Lane on Friday, Feb. 25 and Pennypacker the following Friday.

The assembly series has already been successful at the F. S. Edmonds and Emlen elementary school in Mount Airy, as well as the A. B. Day Elementary School, John E. Hill Middle School and the Roosevelt Middle School in East Germantown.

"Our message is that no matter where you come from you can still learn to increase your knowledge and enthusiasm about education, especially math and technology," said Richard Coson of Grand Hank Productions, a husband and father who resides in East Mount Airy.

"Many times all the students know is just what they learn in schools and maybe

they listen to the rap or hip hop music on the radio. We are here to counteract the music, sometimes the negative music, by using positive music to encourage them to learn about the African American scientists and inventors and know that they, too, can be hyped by education," he said.

One of the songs the group presents to the pupils is entitled "Education is Hype." The song was written by 29-year old scientist known as "Grand Hank" who has a bachelor's degree in science from the University of Pittsburgh and is employed at a leading area pharmaceutical company. The program has even received sponsorship from Bell Atlantic, R. W. Johnson and Arthur McNeil Pharmaceuticals, the Philadelphia Housing Authority, area hospitals and more recently, the Oak Tree Health Plan.

"We believe that it is important to try

"new and different ways to reach our young people. We know that classroom education is important, but not every student is going to be reached in the classroom. That's why during the show we will let the students know there is a Charles Drew and other African Americans who have done things in the sciences. They learn it in a fun way and it does make a lasting impression on many of the kids," said Coson.

When the assembly is presented at each school the students are then left with special workbooks which they can complete in their respective classrooms or at home, with or without the assistance of their parents. They have workbooks devised for the elementary, middle and secondary school levels.

"Even though we want the children to

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get into math or science, the program is really about saying that education is important. We even talk about the relationship between education and success. We talk about how time management is important to succeeding in school and later when you go to work. We talk about students paying attention to their math and science in school even though they don't want to be scientists or something like that," said Coson.

"What we want to leave the students with is the education is power. We want to work with the schools not against it. So far we have had a very good response from the students and the teachers. I think they get the message."