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Celebrating Over 40 Years

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Students have fun while celebrating science

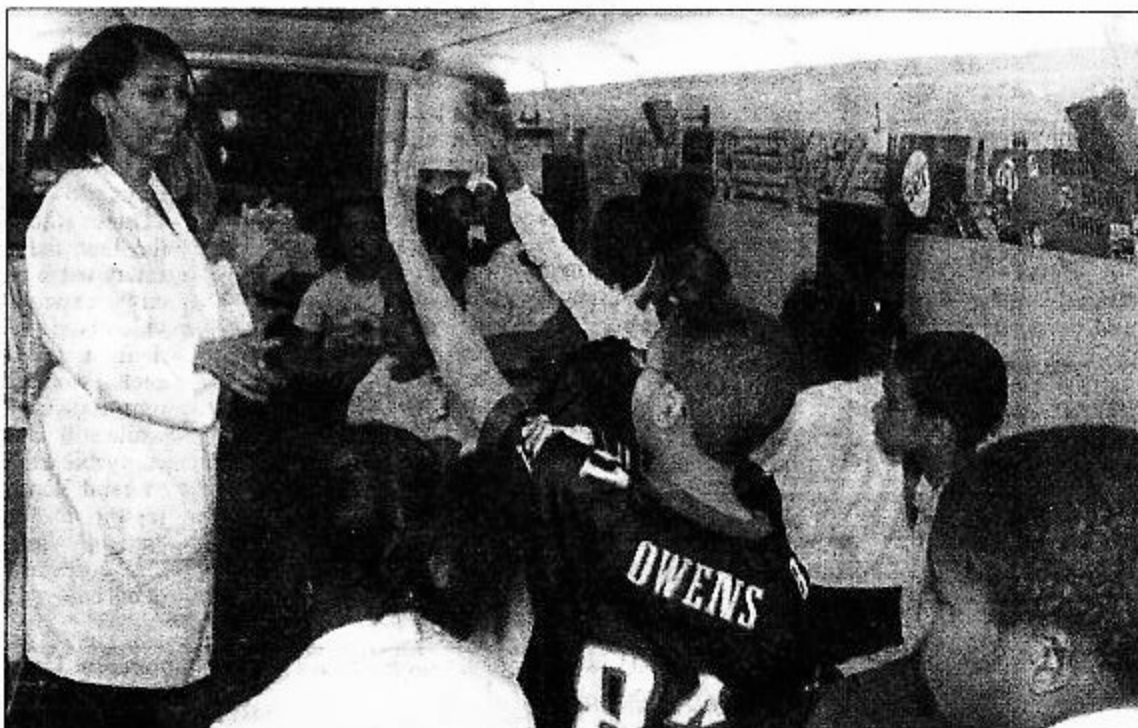
By Beth A. Brooks
Special to The Leader

A. B. Day Elementary hosted mobile Learning Lab

January.

To kick off the celebration of the science lab, Grand Hank's assembly provided the students with learning and entertainment. "The kick-off was awesome," said Principal Karen Dean. "Grand Hank had total audience participation. The children were captivated and their interest in science piqued even more. Grand

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Science can be fun. That's what the students at A. B. Day Elementary School in East Mount Airy learned during the month of April.

Fresh off of a science fair competition, students were treated with a science assembly featuring Grand Hank and were selected to have the Fattah Learning Lab on site during the week of April 18. If you drove by the school recently and noticed a 40-foot bus parked on the grounds, there you could have witnessed cutting-edge science.

The Chaka Fattah Learning Lab is a bus that was converted into a state-of-the-art mobile science lab, traveling to public elementary schools in Philadelphia.

This lab is equipped with science equipment, tables, and stools for student comfort and

Students have fun with science...

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Hank invited students onto the stage and they executed many of the experiments."

Produced by science teacher Colette Coyne, the science fair was the culmination of six weeks of hard work, a lot of which was done at home, requiring parental involvement.

All fifth graders were required to produce a project from start to finish. Teachers in other grades could submit a class project. Students were given certificates and honorable mention ribbons at the assembly prior to Grand Hank's appearance.

According to Dean, "Families were provided with the guidelines and directions for projects at a February Home & School meeting by Ms. Coyne, directly impacting our student participation. We had numerous entries on a variety of topics. Students came up with hypotheses, did research, made inquiries, conducted experiments, and drew conclusions. Participation ranged from kindergarten to fifth

grade."

Grand Hank again held court Monday afternoon in the Fattah Learning Lab as guest instructor Tyraine Ragsdale, a.k.a. Grand Hank, is a former research chemist. His goal is to get students interested in science by integrating hip-hop into the teaching of science.

To Grand Hank's credit, he has written a children's lab book and brought his program to schools across the country. He is probably best known for his cable television show, "The Science Lab of Grand Hank." He also has a science-themed call-in radio show on Power 99 with the Hot Boys.

Once students boarded the bus, they viewed the safety video before starting any experiments. This video is viewed by all students at the beginning of each lesson and stresses the importance of being safe, while still having a fun and enjoyable experience.

Grand Hank conducted a lesson on polymers by "making slime" with water and cornstarch. The students enjoyed the hands-on

lesson and were able to make practical application to what they had learned.

"The science lab has a variety of activities to stimulate the kids, including chemistry, math, and biology," observed Learning Lab teacher Erica James, who started out to become a doctor but switched to teaching three years ago. "I enjoy it and wouldn't trade it," she said of her current career.

Just last week she and the Learning Lab's bus driver, Troy Sawyer, received a package of letters from students at the Bryant School thanking them for bringing the bus to their school.

Sawyer is an integral part of the Learning Lab and is part driver and part caretaker. He "enjoys seeing the children come on the bus with enthusiasm. They enjoy the lesson so much that they want to stay on." Sawyer sees the bus as a "good tool to inspire the minds of the children to encourage them to think about science."

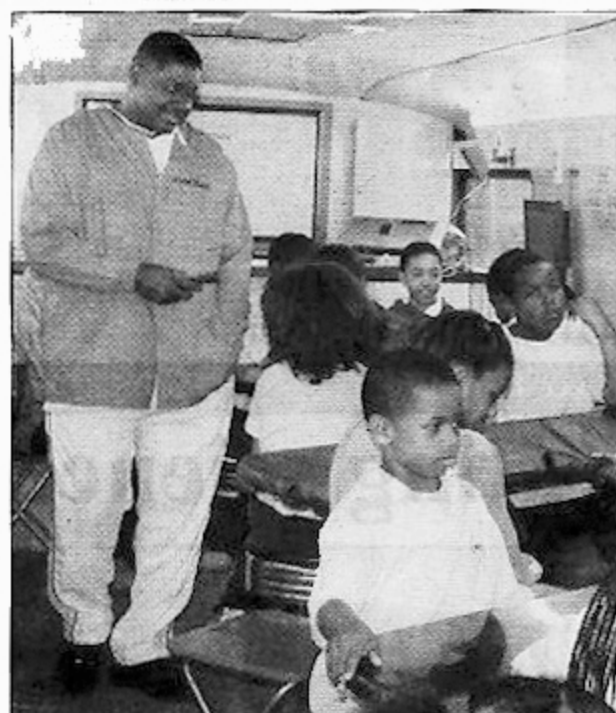
Carrying that theme a little further, Science Lab Project Director Sharlene

Roberson is hopeful that the Science Lab will encourage students' interest in careers in science and technology. "The impetus for the Science Lab is to provide underrepresented groups a fun hands-on science experience," she said.

"The Learning Lab further validates what we are teaching in our science classes," added Principal Dean. "Science is real and affects our everyday lives. The children are experiencing this as they engage in lab work."

Ribbons and certificates were presented to the following students who received Honorable Mention in the Science Fair competition: Dylan Brown, Jasmine Frisby, Brandon Kersey, Courtney Matthews, Andrew Purnell, and Kareem Whitehead.

For more information on the Chaka Fattah Learning Lab, call 215-472-2500. Grand Hank may be contacted at 215-724-5260, by email GrandHank@aol.com, or by visiting www.grandhank.com.



PHOTO/John Patillo

LEARNING FUN...Tyraine Ragsdale (left), a.k.a. Grand Hank, presented a science assembly to A. B. Day Elementary students last week. He is pictured here addressing students on the Chaka Fattah Learning Lab, a bus that travels to different schools.