

Scholarship program benefits gifted students

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When an Apex Middle School counselor contacted Carolyn Winder about her daughter, Destani Bizune being a gifted child, Winder was pleased to hear the news but wasn't sure what to do with it.

Because of high academic standing, the counselor recommended Bizune, who at the time was 12-years-old, for the Duke University Talent Identification Program (TIP).

The program readies students to be accepted to the most competitive colleges in the country through programs such as advanced college courses on select campuses, distance-learning programs developed by Johns Hopkins, Stanford, and Duke, and periodic entrepreneurship career and leadership programs.

At the time, it was not financially feasible for Winder to enroll Bizune in TIP, so through the program she was introduced to the Next Generation Venture Fund (NGVF), which provides scholarships for the program.

"NGVF scholarships cover all classes, events and expenses," said Winder. "They provide \$18,000 over four years to partake in this enhancement of the academic experience."

"We want to raise the playing field for ethnically and racially, but gifted children, who are unrepresented in these programs," said Charles Beckman, director of communications at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth. "The mission is to find academic talent in all of the Ameri-

can neighborhoods, not just in those that can afford this type of program, which is designed for students who test at high levels at an early age and show academic promise. We want to nurture and develop that talent, as it should be."

Beckman, who refers to NGVF as a, "white knight coming in to help the kids", said the fund was started about three years ago by the Goldman Sachs Foundation and is now supported by several other corporations. Winder explains just what a "white knight" it has been for Bizune.

"She has received tremendous benefits and opportunities, and has been able to get a feel for campus life," said the Apex resident. "She's made life-long friends, and has broadened her horizons beyond Apex High School."

Bizune, who is now a sophomore, went on her first summer campus stay at Appalachian State University at the age of 14, where she studied Versatile Shakespeare. The following year, also at ASU, she studied Rethinking American Society. "I really liked the class because it had current events and everything was very relevant to me," said Bizune.

Additionally, Bizune, who plays violin, runs track, and sings in her church choir, took part in a pilot program called BizCamp 2005. "It was an introduction to the world of entrepreneurship," said Winder. "She placed third in the classes contest and was awarded \$125. Placing third led to the National Foundation

for Teaching and Entrepreneurship Youth Expo in New York, which was the national level of BizCamp." Although she did not place at the New York expo, both mother and daughter enjoyed the experience.

"The program gives me a chance to do what other kids don't get to, like go to New York and other new opportunities. It's a lot of work, but it's fun," said Bizune, who is on the AHS student council and in the minority empowerment club.

The summer on-campus classes run for three weeks and cost \$2500, which in Bizune's case is covered by NGVF. Although they miss each other, both mother and child handle the separation well. "It's not difficult for me because I'm only away for three weeks and I talk to my mom everyday," Bizune said. "The summers away are an eye-opener and a mind-opener."

As for burn-out, having gone to school all year, and then college in the summer, Bizune said, "It's not school school, it's cool school, because you're interested in what you're doing."

"This program has helped shape her mind," said Winder, who graduated fourth in her high school class, and excelled in academics when young, garnering her a scholarship to college and grad-school. She calls Bizune, "a chip off the old block."

"I'm hoping this program will make me a better person overall," said Bizune. "I want to make a difference in someone's life, sometime."