



"I Can See I'm Getting There": Stacy Davis, Adult Renewal Academy Student

Stacy Davis is a resident of Shreveport's Cedar Grove neighborhood who had—past tense, he makes plain—a "rough life" on the streets. It's past tense because for the last three years he has been a faithful student in the Adult Renewal Academy.

"I hope to really upgrade my skills. I'm planning for a better future," says Davis, who was 32 when interviewed for this report.

Each Tuesday and Thursday morning he shows up at the Cedar Grove Friendship House on 78th Street to work on math, English and reading—preparatory, hopefully, to earning a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. On Wednesdays he gets instruction in "life skills"—everything from job interview techniques to good health practices.

"You come here, (and) you don't have to worry about anything. You can learn all you want to," he says. "You won't learn if you don't try."

Davis, who lives nearby with his mother, shows a visitor a collection of his completed reading assignments, many marked by a smiley face and the words "Good Job." His real love, however, is art. He takes lessons, and his face brightens as he leafs through his pencil drawings.

Carol Hamilton, a retired public school teacher, teaches Davis and the other GED students. "It's rewarding to me because it makes me feel I'm contributing something," says Hamilton, whose position is funded by the local school system.

Another teacher—a retired school counselor—handles the "life skills" class. An optional half-hour Bible study precedes the morning sessions, and a number of volunteers are on hand all three days to provide one-on-one tutoring and mentoring.

Gloria Millender, a teacher and counselor by profession, is the staff member responsible for the adult education program at Cedar Grove and a similar one at the Barksdale Annex Friendship House. Asked how she manages to find enough volunteers, she replies, "I just tell the Lord what I need, and He brings them into my path."

There is no time limit on participation in the Adult Renewal Academy. Students can attend as long as it takes to earn a GED. Stacy Davis is not quite ready but says, "I can see I'm getting there."

(Based on a site visit and interviews conducted in April 2006. Hamilton has since left the Cedar Grove adult education program, according to staff.)