

HANES MIDDLE SCHOOL PTSA (Hanes Academic Academy PTSA)

Grant Proposal for the Garden Council of Forsyth County

April 30, 2003

By Eric Elliott, PTSA President

The Hanes PTSA's mission and this project. The Hanes Middle School PTSA (Hanes Academic Academy PTSA) serves, as do many PTSA/PTA groups in the county, as a vital network of support for our local school community, providing as a group the access to financial resources and long-term visioning that individual parents and supporters of our school would be unable to give. Our school has shared space with the Lowrance School for developmentally disabled youth since the two schools were combined with new construction in 1992, though each school functions as a separate organization within the school premises, sharing library and cafeteria facilities, as well as other selected public spaces. Hanes School was a public high school for the county for many years; Lowrance an elementary school. When the schools were originally built, the surrounding neighborhood was a thriving residential area with minimal industrial encroachment. Now the schools' common building faces busy Indiana Avenue on its north face, a location probably more industrial, more heavily trafficked, than any school site in the county. In recent years with the shift in school assignment policies, attendance at Hanes School has dramatically dropped, from 1100 to less than 700 students. In spite of such attendance drops, our PTSA has still been able to raise some \$12,000 to \$14,000 yearly in direct donations (primarily from parents of its HAG (Highly Academically Gifted) students). The student population is a challenging one with which to build a spirit of community within the school; though HAG students, largely white, do share in elective classes with students in the traditional curriculum, largely black and Latino. Since being abandoned as a high school, for which the school had a strong alumni base of support, the school and its environs have not been embraced by the greater community with any consistency. When the school was renovated in 1992, no new landscaping plan for the school was developed – and indeed, no signage was placed along the street to tell even what the name of the school was. Visitors had to know where to look at 35mph to see a small label above one of the school's many entrances.

This year's PTSA has sought to reverse the decline in school spirit and community support for this potentially vibrant resource for both youth and the neighborhood. Internally, we focused on direct support for teachers in a tough budget year, as we did not raise enough monies in recent years to do what we had hoped for support of teachers. We sought to get as many youth and parent members of PTSA as possible, building community and spirit by giving away simple things like a car magnet to every youth and staff member connected with the school. We gave a pizza party during the school day for over 200 student members and started a PTSA Student Service Club this year, for kids to do work on campus and beyond. We were encouraged in such service work by talks from the local United Way and Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods representatives and letters from Dr. Martin, Rep. Burr and Sen. Edwards. We have won several awards this year for a single year increase in PTSA membership from 334 last year to 567 members

in 2002-2003. Once all pledges and matches are in, we will meet our Direct Donation Drive goal of \$13,500, an increase over last year's \$12,000 raised. And we are continuing to do those hospitality, library helps, competitions, and awards that are the work of PTAs nationwide, year in and year out.

The issues we hope to address with this project. Our PTSA identified early on over the summer of 2002 the need to improve traffic safety, the curb appeal, and the identification and land usage of our site. Clearly identified signage at our various entrances and for the overall facility would be important to improving our children's safety and the ease of use of the school, but also be vitally important to conveying to the community what is happening at our place and the pride in our school communities. In summer 2002 the northwest corner of our large triangular school lot was an abandoned industrial site bounded on all sides by an ugly barbed wire fence. This property was until 1997 a roofing company which the school system purchased but which the system never fully integrated into our site even though the fence runs but ten feet north of our school bus parking lot. Our PTSA voted to look into tearing down the fence and integrating the corner more aesthetically with the rest of our tree-filled campus. One of Hanes' attributes is its landscaping, and space, given the industrial nature of its north side. Upon inquiry to the school system, however, we discovered that the school system was in negotiations with a neighboring church to sell the property for a parking lot. We promptly secured a face-to-face meeting with the system and the New Unity Missionary Baptist Church, and convinced all parties that for the health of the neighborhood and the school that we would try and beautify that ignored corner. The church, which is considering an expansion of its facilities at some future date, could use our bus parking lot for additional parking as the church grew, under a future lease agreement with the school system.

The proposed project. From that meeting our PTSA board voted to hire a landscape architect to sketch out a vision for beautifying the northwest corner of our lot and our front entrance (see attached landscape map). Mr. Bill Gould, a retired landscape architecture professor at the University of Maryland, city resident, and designer of the 1980 and 1999 renovations to Grace Court, spent many hours walking the grounds and inspecting current foliage to see what would blend with our existing grounds. He has designed a space that is framed, yet open; a buffer, yet a seamless blend with our campus. His design allows space for future expansion of a trail for Lowrance youth to go out under the trees near their wing of the school, perhaps with help from the volunteers of the neighboring Kaba-Ilco plant who frequently assist at the school. His open-center grassy design allows for the potential for overflow event parking at the school on the upper lot closest to the school building, both for us and the church. And his framing in green will considerably soften one of the harshest school fronts in the county and provide a pleasant space for residential neighbors and visitors to enjoy from their car, their window, or by foot.

The school system has already removed most of the barbed wire fencing and an abandoned loading dock from the former roofing property on the northwest corner. The

system also removed a damaged fence at the front parking lot. In negotiations with the system, through Mr. Steve Cathcart of the Operations office of the system, we have secured the system's assurance that if we are able to raise the funds for the plantings and directional signage that they will install and maintain such. Also, the system will repave and re-stripe our front entrance (including a small basketball court) to accommodate the new front signage, and we will purchase concrete stops to better identify parking spaces in our front. Again, the front parking area was ill-designated and landscaped in the initial 1992 work. Currently, it is confusing to visitors and parents where to come to "the front" of our school. [This school year, when a youth had to be rushed by ambulance to the hospital, a school administrator had to go outside to flag down the ambulance to point out the Hanes entrance.] We are grateful for the system's eagerness to address these long-ignored problems in a time of tight resources. We have secured bids on the cost of signage, both small directional signs and for the purchase and installation of a large entrance sign. We have also investigated costs for landscaping materials. And we recently met with Alderman Vivian Burke to begin addressing with the City Transportation Division and others the need for flashing school zones lights, and better crosswalks and signage, for youth pedestrians approaching the school from Piedmont Park and other heavily traveled streets such as Glenn and Patterson.

The project's lasting impact on the school and the community. The PTSA has already paid the cost of a landscape designer and pledged at least \$500 in additional funds toward a community beautification fund, perhaps another \$500 more, depending on the year's final income and disbursements. But as a board we are also committed to increasing our PTSA reserves to \$2,500 from \$1,700 this year, given the uncertainties in both the future fund-raising climate at our school and in school system support budgets. And we feel that the issues of safety for the youth in accessing the school, community appearance, and responsibility and pride for our learning institutions are each issues which should be open to support from the greater community, not just parents directly affected by the issues – which even in the most affluent of schools, in the short three-year cycle of middle school, would command a short attention span in the minds of parents. This project will beautify a neighborhood, reconnect alumni with a site they might have felt forgot them, and remind the community on the outside of the great resource the Hanes and Lowrance Schools are to our entire community. It will be a sign of hope and community caring – indeed to date it has already brought three string institutional neighbors, the church, the school, and the large factory in front of the school into dialogue over the area's needs. The surrounding neighborhood has no organized neighborhood association. The school is the neighborhood's remaining anchor. Without proper attention paid to the image our school projects to the general public and the environment we offer to our youth, the health of our school and the neighborhood will suffer as much or more than from any foreseeable budget cuts.

A timeline and projected costs for the proposed accomplishments of this work, for which we ask your support, is listed on the following page:

Landscape Design	\$500 (paid for by PTSA already)
Plants for Landscaping (willow oaks, kousa dogwoods, crepe myrtles, red maples, Parson's juniper)	\$11,000
Large Sign (4.5 x 7 Painted Redwood routed sign)	\$3,500
Installation of Large Sign	\$750
12 Small Directional Signs at \$75 (will be paid for by individual Hanes classes and PTSA)	\$900
Concrete Stops for parking lot 70 @\$10	\$700
Repaving and Striping of Parking lot, installing stops	System Covers Cost
Planting Plant Materials	System Covers
Paving and Striping of Front Basketball Court	System Covers
Two new permanent benches for flagpole area	\$500
Install new benches	System Covers
New Sign in front of Gymnasium	\$300
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TOTAL GOAL	\$18,150

Schedule for Work

Small Directional signs – create and install	By May 2003
Repave/re-stripe lot and basketball court, install concrete stops	Summer 2003
Install large sign	Summer 2003
Install new benches	Summer 2003
Plant new plant materials	Fall 2003

Amount requested. Our PTSA will be soliciting contributions from local businesses around our school and major gifts from primary employers and foundations in our community. Given the Garden Council's role in building neighborhoods and supporting beautification in our community, we ask that you consider awarding us a major gift of \$2500 to \$5000 for this project.

Thank you for your consideration of this application.



Eric Elliott
Hanes PTSA President



Nancy Bratton
Hanes School Principal



Jackie Pittman
Hanes PTSA Vice President



Ron Caviness
Lowrance School Principal