

GRANT KEEPS SCHOOL BELLS RINGING

Summer classes continue despite state cuts

BY JOHN L. GUERRA , Citizen Staff

School's out for summer, the kids have dumped their school papers in the trash, and this year's graduating seniors have been sent on their way to wherever life takes them.

School hallways, which during the school year are filled with the sound of children making their way to classes, are now silent as many students and teachers take a much-appreciated break.

But what about summer school, or those promised summer programs for children who need a place to spend the day? If Monroe County schools relied solely on state education funding, there wouldn't be summer school this year. But thanks to a \$5.4 million 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, summer programs began Monday for 760 Florida Keys children.

Summer school ordinarily is funded by the Florida Department of Education, but money for summer programs was cut this year because of a shrinking state budget.

The 21st Century grant already pays for before- and after-school remedial learning during the school year, and now will be used to extend school into summer for those who need it.

"With no state funding for summer school or summer programs, many children in Monroe County wouldn't have had an opportunity to participate in school district-sponsored summer programs," said Schools Superintendent Randy Acevedo.

The summer programs are from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday at the Key Largo School, Stanley Switlik and Gerald Adams elementary schools, Horace O'Bryant Middle School and Marathon High School. Children in the attendance zone for Glynn Archer Elementary School will participate at Gerald Adams.

The classes end July 16. Money from the district and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office's forfeiture fund will pay for programs at Coral Shores High School, Plantation Key School and Sugarloaf School. Poinciana Elementary School students will participate at Gerald Adams.

Though the classes have a summer flair, they're geared to children who need help with academic skills. Students scoring below proficiency will be targeted first.

"They will be engaged in differentiated learning where academic skills are presented in a fun, stimulating way," said Nancy Romain, the district's grants administrator. "They won't even know they are working on reading, math or science skills — they will just think they are having fun."

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