



How far would you go for expert emergency care?
Try right in the neighborhood.

The convenient ER that you can get to fast.

North Fulton Regional Hospital
Emergency Services

www.northfultonregional.com

3000 Hospital Boulevard in Roswell, GA—1.5 miles north of Mansell Road on Alpharetta Highway



COMMUNITY

Loving to Learn with **Ron Clark**

By Jonathan Copsey / STAFF

Was the man leaping back and forth, jumping up and down and waving his arms really a teacher? Was he really headmaster of an up-and-coming private school? Was he really wearing bright red and yellow striped socks?

Yes, yes and yes.

Educator Ron Clark did all that and more when he appeared before a group of people at the home of Steve and Mary Beecham in Alpharetta last week in order to promote his school and ask for help in supporting it.

“We invited him to come to our school, King’s Ridge,” said Mary Beecham, “and we invited teachers from the community to come and hear him and we invited him here to have a fundraiser for him. We were hooked and now that we’ve seen the school in action... it’s just been a real blessing [to know Clark].”

Ron Clark is a man renowned for his manic teaching style; it’s what has got him so many followers. He has been lauded by the likes of Oprah and teachers clear across the world for an approach that, frankly, makes it fun to teach. Beginning his career in North Carolina, Clark soon went to Harlem to teach in his unique way. He was so successful that Disney named him the National Teacher of the Year. He now has his own private school in south Atlanta.

“The average time a new teacher stays in the profession is four years,” said Clark. “New teachers are coming in like tornados. They want to teach, they’re so excited and have so much passion, then they get into the classroom and are told ‘teach to this test.’ Then they leave the profession, because it’s not what they bargained for. So teachers’ hands are being tied and we’re not allowed to be creative and innovative. And as teachers, if we’re not allowed to be creative and innovative we’re not going to raise kids and build a nation that is creative and innovative and thinks differently.”

And that’s precisely what his school, the Ron Clark Academy, is aiming to do – teach creatively and with innovation to allow children to not just learn, but learn to love learning. The children learn through song, dance and art, even being taken on field trips to each continent around the world. They even have a program to teach teachers, with over 3,000 taking part last year.

Clark’s first book, “The Essential 55,” is

simply a book of classroom rules that Clark thinks make a class work. There are the obvious ones such as be attentive, do not forget homework, do not tease; and then there are the not so obvious, such as proper table manners and the famous “No Doritos” rule (why? Simply because he hates those chips).

“They’re rules for life,” he said. “Its about manners, respect and values... I noticed that a lot of kids aren’t being raised with those manners and values. So I started writing them out. The first year I had five rules for my students. The next year I had 8 then 12 and 18 and 22, then I moved to Harlem to teach and it grew to 55.”

Along with Kim Bearden, the Middle School Teacher of the Year (who happens to be from Cobb County), Clark came to Atlanta with the dream of starting his own school, where he and Bearden and others like them can teach how they



Photo By Jonathan Copsey / STAFF
Educator Ron Clark

see fit, getting children to love learning rather than learn to pass a test. The school is in a converted factory in a rough part of south Atlanta and is everything its founders had hoped. It even has a giant slide in the middle of it.

And, really, what school is complete without a giant slide?

Because they deal largely with underprivileged kids, Clark and Bearden are always looking for funds, which is why they were in north Fulton. At last year’s event, the Beecham’s helped raise \$24,000, enough for two students to stay in the school for a year.

There were several influential people who heard Clark speak, including Alpharetta Councilmen D.C Aiken and David Belle Isle as well as Milton Councilman Burt Hewitt. All had heard Clark speak at last year’s event and had nothing but praise for the man and his mission, accolades that were echoed by everyone else who attended.

In much the same way as the “teach a man to fish” story, if you teach a student to learn a test, they will pass that test, but if you teach a student to love learning, they will pass every test given to them. And that’s exactly what Clark and his academy want.

For more information on the Ron Clark Academy, visit www.ronclarkacademy.com.