



ELIZABETH ROBERTSON / Inquirer Suburban Staff
 Music professor Mike Billingsley (left) helps Alonzo Miller, 17, create a song at the academy, at Camden County College.

Helping hand to fulfill college dream

UPWARD BOUND from D1 make up about 15 percent of the summer academy's population, he asked why they have traded a big chunk of their summer laytime for serious classroom instruction, they say they want to go to college.

"College is something I always wanted to do," said Causey, the oldest of five children who live in a two-bedroom apartment with their mother, Andy Causey. "My mother was ready to go to college, when she had me. She never went."

Upward Bound, a national program started under President Lyndon B. Johnson in the 1960s, does not accept students whose parents graduated from college.

Requirements are that applicants have a 2.5 grade point average or the ability to achieve it, and attend not only summer classes but also classes

at a community college for two Saturdays a month between the fall and spring. They also must cooperate with counselors dispatched by the college to their high schools.

In addition, a family's annual income may not exceed \$14,700 in a one-student home, and, for the students at Camden County College, they must live in the county.

Most of the students in the local program go on to college, according to Dennis C. Ferry, the director of the Upward Bound Academy. In a study he did last year, 15 of 19 seniors who graduated in June were attending college in September.

Six were going to Camden County College, and one was what state officials call a "New Jersey star student," one who graduated in the upper 20 percent of his or her high school class. In that case, the state

pays the student's tuition as long as the student attends a community college.

"Sometimes I feel like I opened the front door and found a child in a wicker basket," Ferry said. "I get emotionally attached to the kids and excited when good things happen."

Ferry pointed to Makeda Small as a success story in the making.

Small, who lives with her working mother, Elzena Robinson, in a two-bedroom house in Lindenwood, has been in the program for two years. An aspiring chemical engineer, Small has a 3.3 grade point average and is a forward on the Lindenwood High School varsity basketball team. Her mother fuels her ambitions.

"She is my hero," the senior said in the college's noisy cafeteria. "She did not go to college, but she wanted me to have a

better life. She always made sure I did everything to the best of my abilities in school."

While working on one of the many laptops in the cafeteria, a teammate, Aspen Price-Perry, said she was so happy with the way Upward Bound was helping her to become a better student that she didn't mind missing time with her friends and not having the extra money generated by a summer job.

Alonzo Wilson and Katrina Rigney, athletes at Woodrow Wilson High School, agreed over lunch that the sacrifice was well worth their time. Like Causey, they believe Upward Bound will help them to realize their dreams.

Candy Causey put it this way: "I want [Daquan] to fulfill a dream of a college education."

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Katrina Rigney, 17, concentrates while using the computer to create her song in the college-level music-appreciation class.



Aspen Price-Perry proves a good listener during the class. Her efforts were part of the Upward Bound program.