

Your letters »

Bicycle safety

Bicyclists must heed their responsibilities under law

After reading the recent articles about bicyclists, bicycle accidents and bicycle deaths on our streets, it seems surprising that not once has the bicyclist's responsibility under the law been mentioned.

Quoting from the regulations:

"Any person operating a bicycle upon a roadway at less than the normal speed of traffic at the time and place and under the conditions then existing shall ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway...

"Persons riding bicycles upon a roadway may not ride more than two abreast except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles. Persons riding two abreast may not impede traffic when traveling at less than the normal speed of traffic at the time and place and under the conditions then existing and shall ride within a single lane."

I am a bicyclist and ride 30-40 miles a week on public roads. Many times during the course of riding I have had to stop for motorists at intersections who either didn't see me (motorists typically watch for vehicles, not bicycles) or ignored the fact that I had the right of way. Nonetheless, I am smart enough to know that I am responsible for my own safety when riding on public streets.

I live on Indian Rocks Beach. Gulf Boulevard seems to be a popular route for bicycle clubs. Regularly, I am forced to drive 15 mph behind groups of bicyclists impeding traffic by riding two, three and four abreast on Gulf Boulevard.

Push for AP has low payoff | Nov 21

Benefits of AP go beyond exams

I have to disagree with this article concerning a "low payoff" for advanced placement classes in Hillsborough schools.

Traditionally, my school has had a high number of Advanced Placement tests given every year. Our overall pass rate was 43 percent out of 2,700 exams. Last year, we increased the number of Advanced Placement exams by 700 to a total of 3,300. Our overall number of passed exams rose only 1 percent, but we increased the number of possible opportunities for college credit by nearly 300 exams.

I think those numbers state that it was a high payoff for our continued push into Advanced Placement. Additionally, you have to look at each student. Some do take too many Advanced Placements, lose focus, or might not belong in the course due to certain circumstances.

The teachers in my school have done an amazing job teaching Advanced Placement and are working hard on a constant basis to modify their techniques to give our students the best experience.

I will continue to push students into Advanced Placement because the experience will make them better prepared for the future. The student who is pushed into advanced placement, works hard (and gets only a low C in the course), maximizes his experience and gets a 2 on the exam (technically, not passing) is a success story, not a failure by student or teacher standards.

We do have to continue to evaluate the big picture and be realistic with Advanced Placement, but this district push has been tremendously beneficial, and we do it for our kids, not the state grading system. Would any parent want his child told "no" and not given the opportunity for a higher-level class just because he is told he "cannot handle it"?

Rob Nelson, principal, Plant High School, Odessa

What the law intended

This article prompted me to recall the purpose of AP programs in Florida. I concluded that the program is about access, not AP exam scores.

The Florida Legislature passed the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement Act during its 2004 session. Then-state Sen. Les Miller sponsored the bill. The Legislature's intent included "that every student enrolled in a public secondary school has access to high-quality, rigorous academics, with a particular focus on access to advanced courses."

"AP exam pass rates" is nowhere in the legislation. Perhaps the Legislature recognized that a cultural change in producing academic excellence might take a decade or more.

Jason D. Mims, Tampa

STUDYING THE PROBLEM

<http://flcourier.com/news/articles/studying-the-problem.html>

- 9-2-2010

2 Floridians have made it their business to help Black children learn

Institute motivates urban students

The Motivated Individual Minority Students (MIMS) Institute champions public education and promotes academic excellence in urban zip codes.



Lt. Colonel Jason Mims wants to see more parents show up at school board meetings.

The MIMS Institute works to not only increase the graduation rate of students in urban zip codes but to encourage them to increase their reading skills, take college placement courses, score higher on the SAT, and apply to America's top universities.

CEO and founder Lt. Colonel Jason Mims says the Race to the Top funds will be used mainly to improve teacher quality. He wants to see the money go directly to help the students.

"You can improve teacher quality forever and it won't help one student," he told the Florida Courier.

"Race to the Top dollars don't get down to the community level. It has to do with teachers and evaluations. How do you ensure that some of the funds go to low-performing schools?"

Mims: Show up to the meetings

The first way is by attending school board meetings, he said.

"If education of our children is important, we better find the time to put our butts in the seat to watch where they are spending the money. The agenda is out a week in advance. Even though it doesn't sound exciting, you should be there," Mims explained.

"They meet 22 times a year and we are not there. We should embarrass each other by putting on the front page of the newspaper how many Blacks attended the school board meetings in the counties with low performing schools like Hillsborough, Dade, Broward, etc.

"Ask them to show me on this list of agenda items where you will consider funding for low-performing schools. I've seen school boards get six-digit funds that were spent for technology but if you look at the paper work, you will see the money was all spent at Hewlett Packard instead of for small individual groups or children."

Mims said he has been attending school board meetings in Tampa for more than 10 years.

"We must ask ourselves what small part I can play over the course of a year. Go to school board meetings three times. It doesn't take a whole bunch of people. If 10 people say, 'I will do three or one,' that's a good start. It requires a commitment," he said.

Making board members accountable

"In my mind, we are only committed as long as it takes to express our dissatisfaction but not long enough to fix the problem. Our children don't have a reasonable hope if we don't do something," he explained.

"Moreover, the Black school board members need our help. Many times, there is only one Black on the board. If there were more Black folks in the audience in the school board meeting, it gives her the fuel and backing to get what she needs done.

"Even the board could reach out to the people in community to bring 10 people to school board meetings, but it is a closed system. When I call them on certain items, they take offense. Citizens have the responsibility to hold local authorities accountable for what they need in their communities."



Lt. Colonel Mims is shown with Florida Congresswoman Kathy Castor. Mims says it's important for citizens to get involved in the community and attend government meetings.

Expertise as intelligence analyst

Mims' Army career highlights include work as an intelligence analyst for Africa and the Middle East, a United States Central Command Politico-Military Affairs officer and Coalition Forces Land Component Command Future Plans officer (Camp Doha, Kuwait – Operation Enduring Freedom).

He received bachelor's degrees in Government and Modern Languages-French from the University of Notre Dame and his master's in National Security Affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School.

Mims' passion for his work in education began when one of his sons entered eighth grade. He happened to be the only one attending a meeting held during Black History Month sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women. Mims showed up and wrote down a list of 10 questions and still has the list and answers.

Ask the questions

"How many Black males in the freshman class? Answer, 140. How many had a 3.0 or better grade average? Answer, 8. And my son wasn't one of them," Mims said. "When they graduated, there were only 22 pictures in the yearbook. They may have graduated and not taken a picture, but my son was the only one with an honor cord although there were eight other boys smarter than he."

Mims set out to figure out why this occurs through his institute. He says often it's as simple as letting a student know you are interested in what he or she is doing.

"A young lady is about to graduate and in an advanced placement macroeconomics class. It's January, the second semester and she's getting F's. Someone called me and all I did was sit down and have a conversation with her," he noted.

"I went in and talked to the teacher and asked the teacher for economic books, like I was going to open up the book and figure it out. I never opened it up. She (the student) knew I had the book and had access to her progress reports in the class online so I could see how she was doing so she knew I was watching and the teacher knew I was watching. She went from F to B."

Show interest

"All she needed to know was someone was interested. Find me someone in our zip code that looks like her who can have a conversation about macroeconomics with her. Where does she get her reinforcement for these principles highlighted in her class?"

"I took before and after pictures of her grades just to prove a point and I didn't do any work. She did the work."

"There are a lot of positive influences outside the classroom that made the difference. You have 28 teachers in seven classes over four years. Out of those, maybe four made a difference. Several teachers you remember. The others just passed on the information they were supposed to pass on to you," Mims added.

"Others showed me things that created the concept in my mind to yearn big and go for the vast seas. They gave me the memo, 'This is America and you can have anything you want,' but it's just like a cafeteria. You have to get up and get it yourself."

"That is what we need to tell our children. I believe we have everything in our community to set this thing right."

Activist To Run For School Board Seat

Tampa resident **Jason Mims** has filed paperwork with the Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections Office to seek an elected post. **Mims**, a retired U. S. Army Lieutenant Colonel, is seeking to run for the District 7 Seat of the Hillsborough County School District.

Mims filed to run for the office last month. He must qualify for the position by Thursday, June 20th. **Mims**, along with **Stephen Gorham**, is challenging school board incumbent **Carol W. Kurdell**.

Kurdell is currently the Vice Chairperson of the board. The seat she currently holds is the only seat

Mims said, "My priority as a school board member will be to see that students who do the hard work actually gain a chance to pursue college opportunities, both in Florida and at America's top national universities.

"My candidacy responds to opportunities to change outcomes for often overlooked young people who have the ability to make significant contributions to their schools, their communities, and their nation."



JASON MIMS

Mims, who is 54, retired from the military in 1995. He returned to active duty for a year after the 9-11 terrorist attacks.

Since returning to Tampa, he has been an advocate for education.

Residents will cast voters for 4 school board seats in the upcoming election. Other incumbents seeking re-election are **Susan Valdes**, District 1, **Jack Lamb**, District 3, and **Doretha Edgecomb**, District 5.

Reporter Iris B. Holton can be contacted at (813) 248-1921 or by e-mail iholton@flsentinel.com

http://www.sptimes.com/2007/05/18/Hillsborough/Signing_Day_isn_t_jus.shtml

Signing Day isn't just for athletes

A community event celebrates academic successes in poor neighborhoods.

By LETITIA STEIN

Published May 18, 2007

TAMPA -- Keyara Franklin could have been another statistic.

Broken bones from a car accident kept her home much of her freshman year, and she changed high schools three times in as many years.

But she took a harder road than dropping out of school.

She signed up for college-level, Advanced Placement courses, and stuck it out through the homework and tests - and being the only black student in the classroom.

"It would have been easy to give up," said Keyara, 18. "I just kind of told myself that I want to succeed in life and do things toward my future that would make my future better." Keyara will head to the University of Central Florida after graduating from Wharton High School next week.

Thursday night, she learned how much the community values her effort. Keyara and 30 other students from some of Hillsborough's poorest neighborhoods were invited to the First Annual Academic Letter of Intent Signing Day Dinner.

It was time, community leaders decided, to celebrate academics with the fanfare usually devoted to athletics. They snapped photos of students behind college T-shirts. They each signed a pact vowing to earn a degree in four years.

"When I started attending Middleton, it was all about athletics," said Ralphy Adelson, 18, who plans to study biology at the University of Florida and is the valedictorian of Middleton High School. "It's getting around that academics is equally important."

That's exactly the message that Rep. Betty Reed hoped to send to the voters she represents in House District 59, a collection of heavily black neighborhoods from east Tampa to Temple Terrace to Progress Village. She knows much work remains.

District 59 claimed just one percent of more than 2, 800 Hillsborough students with four or more AP classes on their resumes. Most individual high schools count more students reaching that bar. Plant High School, at the high end, has 339.

"We need to turn up the volume on academic excellence in the black community," said local activist Jason Mims, 53, one of the organizers of the letter signing event. "We've got to encourage people who may be wondering, 'Is it okay to take these AP classes?'"

When he and Reed teamed up, they found untold success stories. The students whom they identified tout acceptance letters from elite schools, such as the University of Florida and Morehouse College. Most are

black, and bucking the academic achievement gap of white and minority students. Just 8 percent of Hillsborough students who have taken four-plus AP classes are black.

Reed saw that many didn't understand the importance of AP classes when her own grandson passed them up for an easier schedule. They can count for college credits, giving the student a head start in college. They also weigh heavily in college admission decisions. This spring, Reed helped pass a bill to make sure minority families know when their children are eligible for advance classes.

Her co-sponsor, Democratic Sen. Tony Hill, drove in from Jacksonville to watch the letter-signing ceremony in the cafeteria at Blake High School. He wants to take the concept national through Omega Psi Phi, a fraternity.

The event featured typical graduation fare and speeches about staying focused. Until organizers realized an oversight -- they didn't know who in the room was a class valedictorian. The students were asked to stand. One rose, then another, a third, a fourth.

The cheers could have come from a football stadium.

Letitia Stein can be reached at lstein@sptimes.com.

Fast Facts: Academic achievers

House District 59 counted 31 seniors graduating with four or more AP courses, out more than 2, 800 Hillsborough students meeting the standard. The House District 59 students who attended the First Annual Academic Letter of Intent Signing Day Dinner:

- Ralphy Adelson, Middleton.
- Carol Arocho-Gonzalez, Hillsborough.
- Briana Bell, Armwood.
- Kierston Brice, Tampa Bay Technical.
- Alexia Cote, Robinson.
- Terri-Ann Davis, Tampa Bay Technical.
- Tiffany Defiore, Robinson.
- Megan Florez, Riverview.
- Keyara Franklin, Wharton.
- Maryann Hernandez, Hillsborough.
- Dana Hughes, Blake.
- Sandy Joseph, King.
- Ciera Keenan, Tampa Bay Technical.
- Ricky Madhavan, King.
- Sherline Marcellus, Hillsborough.
- Catrina Milbry, Chamberlain.
- Taylor Myers, Blake.
- Orville Pemberton, Tampa Bay Technical.
- Ysanda Prince, King.
- Julian Scott, Plant.
- Chandra Spires, Plant.
- Kori Szaraz, Middleton.



Jasmine Brown, 18, sits down after receiving a tribute from the Florida House of Representatives presented by Rep. Betty Reed while Debbie Devine reads the plaque Jasmine received during the First National Academic letter of Intent Signing Day Dinner at Blake High School on Thursday. "This is pretty much the coolest thing I have ever gotten," Brown said.

LOCAL

Program Expands To Help More Students Throughout County

BY ANTIONE DAVIS
Sentinel Staff Writer

More Hillsborough County schools will be included in an educational program aimed at helping low-income students attend college.

The Hillsborough County School Board renewed their contract with the Center for Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program on June 5th. The original 2004 agreement between AVID and the school board was limited to only Plant City High School, Marshall Middle and Tomlin Middle School.

The new \$207,910 contract will include seven high schools (Blake, East Bay, King, Lennard, Leto, Middleton and Plant City), and 13 middle schools (Eisenhower, Ferrell, Franklin, Greco, Jennings, Marshall, Memorial, Pierce, Shields, Sligh, Stewart, Tomlin and Webb).

"The 21st century provides academically prepared young people from urban zip codes exceptional opportunities to pursue studies at America's top universities," said **Jason Mims**, Director of the MIMS Institute, a local non-profit aimed at helping minority students attend college. "The MIMS Institute will gather information about AVID program participants who live in zip code 33610."



JASON MIMS
Director, MIMS Institute

One of the goals for the AVID program is to close the FCAT achievement gap by 10 percentage points, and increase the number of potential first-generation college students and graduates. The program is expected to begin in the participating schools during the upcoming school year.

Mims believes that in order for the program to truly be successful, the local community must get involved.

"We plan to share information with faith-based ministries located nearest to where AVID Program participants live," said **Mims**. "Support by faith-based ministries may help the targeted students in these areas to dream big."

October 20, 2006 City Times (St. Pete Times).

http://www.sptimes.com/2006/10/20/Citytimes/Molding_kings_of_class.shtml

City People



Molding kings of classrooms

Jason Mims runs "The MIMS Institute," where he coaches black students in high school toward scholarships for college.

By RICK GERSHMAN
Published October 20, 2006

This is Jason Mims' office.

It's where he ministers to black teenagers with great, though often untapped, academic potential.

It's where he throws parties for students who worked hard to earn scholarships. It's where dreams are inspired, cultivated and celebrated.

And it's where you can get a tasty eggs Benedict for a fair price.

It's the Village Inn at N Dale Mabry Highway, a few blocks north of W Kennedy Boulevard. Mims is just a customer, but he often sets up shop here.

As Mims drinks sweet tea, he points to specific booths around the restaurant. In them, he has helped Hillsborough County minority students achieve goals many never considered pursuing.

Mims, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, is persuasive. And he's passionate. And he's not getting paid for any of his efforts.

"She doesn't like me doing this," Mims says of his wife, April, only part joking. "Because it's free."

For an early dinner this Monday afternoon, Mims wears a white polo shirt with a logo on the chest for "The MIMS Institute."

It's not just his name, but an acronym: "Motivate Individual Minority Students to prepare for and apply to America's top national universities."

Mims, who lives in Sun Bay South, focuses his attention on supporting black male teenagers who live in urban neighborhoods and have solid reading skills. He wants them to take six or more advanced placement classes in high school.

He occasionally works with white and female students. He's proud of daughter Sierra, who attends the University of Tampa. But Mims focuses on young black men because he feels the need is greatest there.

Mims points to a 2005 senior scholarship study of Hillsborough County schools. White males were offered more than \$4.6-million in academic scholarships and about \$700,000 in athletic scholarships.

Black males were offered slightly more than \$1-million in athletic scholarships and less than \$850,000 in academic scholarships.

In 2001, shortly after his son Jason Jr. was accepted at New York University, Mims looked up how many black male students were taking honors classes in Hillsborough County high schools.

Of about 15,000 freshmen in the county, only 199 - less than 2 percent - were black male students taking honors English classes.

In January 2002, Mims set out to talk to the boys, eventually meeting with 159 of them at 16 schools.

"If we could get scholarship money for each of those 159 kids - if they each got \$15,000 a year for four years - that's more than \$9.5-million out there," Mims says.

In September 2002, the Hillsborough County Commission awarded Mims that year's Favorite Sons & Daughters award for his efforts.

The favored son had to make a special trip to accept the honor: The Army had called him back to active duty. At 49, he was stationed for a year in Kuwait.

But the award prompted Mims to redouble his efforts when he returned to Tampa. When he was promoted five times in the military, he explains, "that's not for what you've done, but what they expect you to do. This award is for what they expect from me. So I thought, now I have to go out and do that."

Mims doesn't know how many of those original 159 freshmen went on to receive academic scholarships when they graduated in 2005. But he says several earned scholarships to attend such schools as Brown University, Morehouse College and the University of Florida.

At 53, Mims looks young for his years, with only a thin line of gray stretching along his hairline and along his temples.

He's lean and mean, he drives a red Mustang, and around the eyes, he looks a bit like Jamie Foxx. It's not hard to see why kids respond to his motivation.

He has a nickname for the young black men he works with: "Leroys." Why? Because Mims studied French at the University of Notre Dame, where he graduated in 1975. So it's a twist on le roi, which is French for "the king."

"If we can get some of our young people in some of these schools, they can be kings," he says. "There's no telling what they'll become."

As proof, he pulls out a book listing black Notre Dame alumni. Under 1975, he points to his name. He says: "Read down from there and see if you recognize any names."

Five entries below Mims, there's a distinctive name:

RICE, CONDOLEEZZA

Point taken.

"I'm telling you, you get these kids to these great schools," Mims says, "and you never know what they'll become."

Rick Gershman can be reached at rgershman@sptimes.com or 226-3431.

AT A GLANCE

Jason Mims

Home: Sun Bay South.

Family: Wife, April; son Jason Jr., 23; and daughter Sierra, 19.

Past leadership: U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, retired. He moved to Tampa when he was transferred to Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base.

Present leadership: Helping high school students, primarily young black men, pursue scholarship opportunities at top national universities.

His license plate: "SERVANT."

Retired Army Vet Prepares High School Students For Top Colleges

BY ANTIONE DAVIS
Sentinel Staff Writer

Jason Mims has a passion, and he can spell it out for you with his own last name.

Through his **M.I.M.S. Ministry**, the retired Lieutenant Colonel hopes to **Motivate Individual Minority Students** to prepare for and apply to America's Top National Universities.

"My goal is to let people know that as African-Americans, we do have guys and girls that can go to Harvard," Mims said. "My responsibility is that they have access to the best information for themselves."

Mims has been involved in his ministry for almost three years. He has worked with high school students in Tampa and St. Pete not only gain acceptance into well-known universities, but also arranged for them to have scholarship money to sustain them during their tenure at these large, and usually very



JASON MIMS

expensive colleges.

Justin Gray, a freshman at Notre Dame, is majoring in Economics and African-American studies. A 2004 graduate Hillsborough High, Gray received a scholarship of over \$35,000 per year with Mims' help.

"I had no intention of applying to the bigger, more well-known universities like Harvard or Notre Dame," said

Gray. He (Mims) focused me and let me know that it's okay for Black students to go to schools outside of the norm. There's nothing wrong with doing more than what's expected.

According to Mims, achievements like this can be the norm if parents, people in the community and educators put more emphasis on education.

"I believe that we are silent on the subject of higher academic achievement," Mims said. "We don't promote it like we do other things like sports or leisure activities. As a community, we don't show our young people that we really value their efforts."

Students that Mims works with put plenty of effort into their education. According to Mims, that is the way that it should be.

According to Mims, the key for students is to take the most rigorous courses offered, namely Advanced Placement (AP) classes starting in their sophomore year.

"If parents look at page 84a of the Student Handbook, you will see what courses public high schools offer that prepare for America's best post-secondary opportunities," **Mims** said. "If we don't look for these things for the sake of our students and children, we can't blame anyone else."

According to **Mims**, there is no process set in stone that decides the students that he will work with, just any student that shows the drive to achieve.

"There really is no scientific method," **Mims** said. "Many of the students are from chance meetings or referrals from parents. People throughout the school district know of me so if they know there is student with the potential I meet them that way."

This year, **Mims** sees a lot of positive things about Middleton High School. He plans to spend a lot of time there this year guiding African-American males and females to pursue a better higher education. According to **Mims**, there are 38 black males taking Honors English at Middleton. Honors English is a crucial class for high school students to take if they wish to attend college.

Mims is also working with Middleton High School senior **Joseph Browne**, who as a senior carries a rigorous class schedule and runs track for Middleton.

"Students like **Joseph** who have this amount of potential need to be noticed by our community," **Mims** said. "Some of the seniors this year like **Joseph** were freshmen taking honors English when I met them. They continued to take rigorous academic classes. We should celebrate the choices they made."

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- ▶ Breaking News
- ▶ Nation/World - Front Section
- ▶ Metro
- ▶ Sports
- ▶ MoneySense
- ▶ Baylife
- ▶ Friday Extra
- ▶ Editorial/Opinion
 - Joe Brown
 - Commentary
 - Letters
 - Student Voices
 - Letter of the Day
 - Send a letter to the Editor
- ▶ Births
- ▶ Obituaries
- ▶ Classified
- ▶ Recent Editions

Letter Of The Day: All Have Access To Advanced Classes

Published: May 10, 2004

The Tampa Tribune listed a number of bills and the action taken on them during the legislative session (Nation/World, May 2). I looked for Senate Bill 2184 but found no recap of it on the list. The "Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement" passed both houses of the Florida Legislature without any "nay" votes. Tampa's Sen. Les Miller sponsored the bill.

I encourage black families to read the legislation on the Florida Senate's Web site, www.flsenate.gov. It codifies a partnership established by Gov. Bush in 1999. Black and other students have access to advanced courses - including college-level advanced placement classes - in our state public high schools.

Black families with children who took honors English this year as freshmen would do well to ask about enrolling their sons and daughters in AP world history as sophomores.

JASON D. MIMSTampa

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FEATURES

Community Activist Looks Back At Teens Who Are Studying Rigorous Courses

BY GWENDOLYN HAYES
Sentinel Editor

While parents and education officials all over the State of Florida are mulling over the recent FCAT scores that were released, a Bay Area community activist is proud of the fact that several African American males are among the elite group of teens taking rigorous academic classes at a variety of high schools.

Jason Mims has been visiting a number of high schools in the Hillsborough County School District. He'd hoped he could have visited all 22 by end of school year, but that wasn't to be. He wanted to personally thank the young men for helping him to become a 2002 Champion of Public Education and the recipient of the Hillsborough County Favorite Sons and Daughters Award.

Mims' mission is to showcase the African-American males who are taking rigorous academic classes — such courses as English Honors, Pre-Calculus, Chemistry, World History Honors, Algebra II Honors, Geometry



JASON D. MIMS
Lt. Col., US Army Retired

one of the newest high schools in the district, Mims found 13 young men in their sophomore year studying rigorous academic courses. "These Black males represent at least 8 different zip codes. These young men are willing to read to children over the summer," Mims said. He wants all organizations and churches to know who these guys are.

Robinson High School was

April 2nd at Plant and Robinson, and concluded on May 15th at Wharton.

Mims talked with the young men about educational opportunities after high school and learned that one wanted to attend Stetson University, another wanted to attend the U. S. Air Force Academy, and others are preparing themselves so that one of the top 50 national universities might provide them with a \$15,000 per year academic scholarship.

In the 45 days Mims traveled to the 14 schools, he collected data from 99 young African American males. Seventy have agreed to read to youngsters over the summer.

Mims is in the process of preparing a booklet based on the data he collected from the 14 schools he visited. Schools he was not able to visit were: Blake, Bloomingdale, Chamberlain, Durant, Hillsborough, Jefferson, King and Plant City.

He is eager to share the information he has obtained about different young men. One young man, a senior, is

...American History Honors.

Mims says these Black males are in a position to make unique contributions to their school, their zip codes and children throughout Hillsborough County.

At Middleton High School,

...the school. He started the task on high school campuses on

Academy at West Point. Another will be a freshman at the Fall at Howard University.

12th Annual

Akoss Fashion & African Hair Braiding

Because I Had No Camera

Dear Friends and Cheerleaders

Because I had no camera Monday night, I must paint a word picture for you. Last year on December 1, I had been in Kuwait for 179 days. At that time, the Army was sending soldiers home after six-months of duty augmenting the staff at the land forces headquarters. They were treating retirees recalled to active duty differently, though. I had no orders to return to my "unit," in my case, "my family unit and my community." Though the policy guidance said otherwise, the Army was planning to keep my "out there" for another 179 days. To the Army's credit, I was able to get home in January.

Since returning home, I have cherished even more the opportunities I have to fellowship with Black males taking rigorous academic classes in our public high schools. They represent young people who are making the most of opportunities that other Americans protect in far-away lands under less than ideal circumstances. It would be a tragedy if our community did not have some of our sons participating in the excellent educational opportunities available to them. I rejoice when I can fellowship with them.

Joseph Browne at Middleton is a junior this year. He agreed to be a "guinea pig" for another desire I have. I want our community leaders to break bread with young men of Joseph's caliber. There are two reasons. First, these young men offer our community a seldom-noticed gift: they are in the best position to add diversity to the pool of future high-quality local and national leaders. Second, time invested in them by community leaders sends unmistakable indicators of their value to our community.

Which of our busy community leaders has the time to break bread with young men like Joseph? Let me say this-with pride-about my community. The first

community leader I asked to launch the Leader Fellowship Dinner initiative said, "Yes!"

Tampa City Councilwoman Rose Ferlita arranged for a group of us to meet at TGI Friday on December 1. So at 6:30, I arrived with Sierra. Joseph and his mom were waiting for us in the parking lot. Rose arrived as soon as we reached our table. We were expecting Koinonia (Kim) to join us. She and "her best friend, Jesse" came together after Jesse missed his return flight to Harvard.

Brian was our patient waiter for the next two hours. Joseph had the chance to see two 21st Century Yale University graduates. Kim and Jesse reinforced his own expectations of getting the best education his academic talents will permit. Rose bonded right away with him. She extended an offer for Joseph to shadow her at City Hall. "Wait! I want to spend time with you at City Hall, too!" Sierra interrupted.

Opportunity! That is what the picture would have looked like had I had a camera. For some (Joseph and Sierra), unlimited opportunities await. For some (Kim at Stetson University College of Law and an accepted job offer from a leading national law firm and Jesse at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design) opportunities are flowing. For the rest of us, we have opportunities to motivate, guide and direct these young people toward the best opportunities our nation offers. We also have opportunities to celebrate their successes and break bread in fellowship with them.

There are more "Joseph's" out there awaiting a Leader Fellowship Dinner. Call me if you are, or know of, another "Rose" who will leap at the opportunity to break bread with us. I promise to bring a camera!

In Service To America,
Jason Mims.

FACES & PLACES

Man Honored For Work With Education

By JENNIFER ALDRICH
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TAMPA — Although Lt. Col. Jason Mims is thousands of miles away from the Hillsborough County public school system, he can't help but give credit to its efforts in helping to mold students into successful citizens.

Retired from the Army since 1995, Mims recently returned to active duty and is serving in Kuwait.

"We have sons and daughters from Hillsborough County out here, and they're serving in order for those who are back in the States to have opportunity," Mims said during a recent telephone interview. "If someone wants to see the value of public education, they should be here. I'm looking at the products [of public education] here, and we have some talented individuals."

Having two children of his own who have attended public schools, Mims has had a strong interest in knowing how the public school system works and how he can help make it better.

His son, 19-year-old Jason Mims II, attended Bloomingdale High School and graduated with a 4.0 GPA. He now attends New York University. His 15-year-old daughter, Sierra, is a sophomore at Freedom High School.

"The way to get smart is to attend the school board meetings," Mims said. "I made a commitment to attend because that's a place where I believe any citizen who has a passion for education can learn more about the system and have input."

He is on the Citizen's Advisory Committee to the Hillsborough County School Board and the Communities in Schools of Hillsborough, a dropout-prevention program.

For his efforts, Mims was awarded the Favorite Sons & Daughters Award by Hillsborough commissioners. The award recognizes individuals in the community who have achieved honor and distinction in their field, his being in the Hillsborough County public education system. Mims received his award in September when he made a



Photo from Jason Mims

Jason Mims is an advocate of the public school system. His daughter, Sierra, attends Freedom High School.

short trip home from Kuwait.

"I'm just so proud," said his wife, April. "He's being recognized for all his tireless efforts in serving the community. Even being away, he plans things, sends e-mails, talks to different people; it's like a full-time job."

Most recently, Mims has spent much of his time making sure that young, black male students are aware of the college opportunities that are available to them after high school.

Last January, Mims began a tour giving motivational speeches that included 159 students at 16 schools.

"I'm helping these guys dream big," he said. "And getting them excited about future opportunities. There's a lot left to be done. Helping students achieve means working with the school district."

His goal is to try to raise the number of black males who attend the top 50 universities in the nation.

"The whole thrust of why he's doing it is to help students understand that to get into a better college, they have to have a background in honors courses," April Mims said.

Jason Mims seized his own opportunities by attending the University of Notre Dame on an Army ROTC scholarship and pursuing a career in the Army. He guided his son through public school and has helped him on his journey to NYU.

"By watching my son progress, I saw the excellent opportunities for young men with color," he said. "If they take the right courses, there's no

ABOUT MIMS

NAME: Jason Mims, 49

HOMETOWN: A native of California, he has lived in Hillsborough County since 1987. He moved with his family to South Tampa a little more than a year ago.

PERSONAL INFORMATION: Wife, April Mims; a 19-year-old son and 15-year-old daughter. He attended the University of Notre Dame on an Army ROTC scholarship.

FOR A LIVING: Mims was a retired Army lieutenant colonel but recently re-enlisted and is serving in Kuwait.

ACHIEVEMENTS: In September, during a visit to the states, he received the Favorite Sons & Daughters Award, which is given by the Hillsborough County commissioners to an individual who has achieved honor and distinction in his field. Mims is a public school advocate and visits with black males to encourage them to take honors courses to take advantage of college opportunities. He has also received the Hillsborough Education Foundation's Champion of Public Education Award.

INTERESTS/HOBBIES: He is a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee to the Hillsborough County School Board and the Communities in Schools of Hillsborough, a national dropout prevention program. He has also served on the county commission's Citizens Advisory Committee.

telling where they can go."

In the past, Mims also has assisted middle school students and senior citizens in inner-city areas with their computer skills.

County Commissioner Chris Hart has seen firsthand how Mims commits himself to the causes that are most important to him. Hart has worked closely with Mims on the county's Citizens Advisory Committee and says Mims was an obvious choice for his recent award.

"It's been his selfless service in our community," said Hart, who nominated Mims for the award. "This man is an uncommon hero to both children and adults alike, and he's well-deserving of any recognition."

Want to suggest a Faces & Places? E-mail Jennifer Aldrich, call her at (813) 259-7154 or write to her at The Tampa Tribune, 202 S. Parker St., Tampa FL 33606.

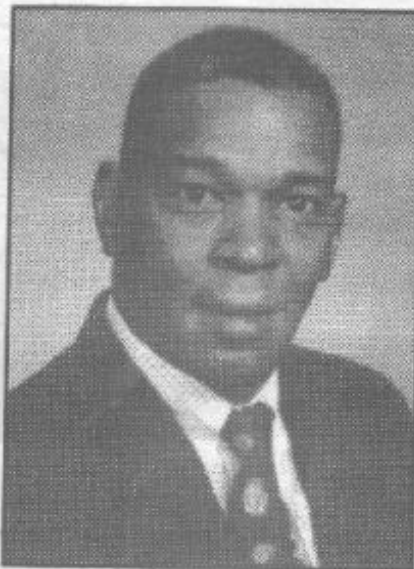
FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2002

Jason Mims Returns To Active Duty

Jason Mims has been a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel for the past 7 years. He recently received orders to report for active duty. He will arrive at Fort Benning, Georgia on Sunday, May 5th. **Mims** expects to receive orders to another location and spend up to a year on active duty service.

It is rare for the military to recall a retiree to active duty. September 11, 2001, however, increased the need for additional military personnel to participate in the nation's war on terrorism. **Mims** waited a few months before letting military officials know of his desire to contribute to Operation Enduring Freedom.

He has a background in planning joint and combined military operations at United States Central Command. He served two three-year tours of duty there between 1987 and 1995. **Mims** made use of his time during the past 7 years sharing computer skills with children and senior citizens. He also promoted



JASON MIMS

efforts by young people to close the gap in academic achievement.

In April, the Hillsborough Education Foundation selected **Mims** as a 2002 Co-Champion of Public Education. The Citizens Advisory Committee to the Board of County Commissioners also nominated him for the Favorite Sons and Daughters of Hillsborough County award for his service to the nation and the community.

Day And Friday

Sunday, Feb 17, 2002 , Tampa Tribune, Commentary Section, Back Page

Being A Doer Means You Never Retire

JOSEPH H. BROWN

It's easy to see why Olin Mott received the Civitan Citizen of the Year award last week at the Florida State Fair Governor's Luncheon. The 81-year-old businessman, who as an Army intelligence officer was wounded during the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, is involved in more local causes than I can list here.

He is the founder of the Olin Mott tire company but does much more than just provide financial support; he gets involved.

In other words, he is a doer, not just a talker.

I mention that because there is a culture of complaint distinct from the culture of problem solvers. I hear from complainers all the time, grumbling about societal inequities and injustice but offering little in the way of solutions.

``You should write about that," they will say, seeming to seek satisfaction in simply ``giving voice" to problems and having someone listen to their gripes.

But there are folks who not only talk the talk but walk the walk as well. And while they're unlikely to be considered for an award like the Civitan, there are two people I believe to be worthy candidates.

What Retirement?

First, there is Jason Mims Jr., who settled in Tampa after retiring from the military. When I first met Jason a few years ago, he was volunteering his time to teach computer skills to both senior citizens and children at a community center in Progress Village.

His ``current priority project" is challenging local black students to do better. He meets with those taking advanced classes and gives them support and encouragement. As he explains it:

``Over the Christmas holidays, the mission came to me to share with each of them how special they are because they recognize and seize exceptional academic opportunities. ... So far, I have visited seven schools and had the opportunity to share an optimist's observation with 63 of them."

So while others simply complain about the black-white achievement gap, Mims opted for hands- on involvement.

And he should know what it takes. His son, Jason III, graduated last year with a 4.0 grade-point average and is now a freshman at New York University.

Then there is Bob Samuels, a retired banker who was diagnosed with prostate cancer shortly after I first met him. He is now an eight- year survivor of the disease.

Rather than just count his blessings, however, Samuels went on a personal crusade to educate men - particularly black men, who get the disease earlier and more often - about the importance of getting checkups and a simple blood test called a PSA - even if they are having no symptoms.

Real Leadership

Samuels is pushing a bill pending before the Legislature that would establish a Prostate Cancer Awareness Program within the state Department of Health. But his most meritorious accomplishment is the annual African American Men's Health Forum, now in its third year. This year's event will take place Saturday at Hillsborough Community College's Dale Mabry campus. He has put this together with a staff of two and, more incredibly, no government help, just the funds he has worked tirelessly to solicit.

Too often in the black community people are labeled as ``leaders," even though they don't really lead anyone. These two black men are leaders, even if their work is done far from camera and microphone range, because they steer people in a direction they might not be inclined to move.

``I came to Florida to retire," Samuels reminded me, and perhaps himself, recently when talking about all the work he has done the last eight years.

Sorry, Bob, doers don't retire; they just find different work.

Joseph H. Brown is a Tribune editorial writer.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2001

FLORIDAMETRO

THE TAMPA TRIBUNE



STEVE OTTO
Columnist

Dig deeper to find heart of volunteer

Sometimes you meet people who seem so impressive on the surface, and then you get to know them and find they're less than meets the eye.

Other times, you run across the likes of Jason Mims, who only seems mildly interesting until you spend a little time with him. And then you wish he could be cloned.

His fax showed up on my desk, as it did on the desks of other media types and politicians in town last week.

There was a frail older woman alone and hurting in an east Tampa apartment. Mims was upset that with all the issues we deal with, the life of an older woman was one issue nobody takes the responsibility to get involved in.

By the time I got hold of Mims, the problem was resolved and the woman was in a treatment center and at least her short-term needs were taken care of. Mims said he knew her through some volunteer computer classes he teaches in Progress Village.

I asked him if he was a teacher in the public schools. He said no, he was just a retired Army colonel and it was something he wanted to do and suggested I might want to take a look.



Mims

Progress Village is something of a forgotten island

in the south end of Hillsborough County. It's just off 78th Street.

The community of a little less than a thousand homes came into existence a little more than 40 years ago when the need to build Interstate 4 displaced entire — mostly black — neighborhoods. Although the new Progress Village was out there with the cows, where there were few shops and no bus service, its low-interest homes offered many families a first chance at homeownership.

Today, the place looks a little worse for the wear on the outside, but the community remains close-knit and there is genuine pride in its small successes over the years.

Mims caught me by surprise when I wandered into the community center. Maybe it's because I figured a retired Army colonel teaching computer skills to seniors would be, well, not just a geek, but an old geek.

So here comes this guy with one of those haircuts that you can only get on a military post and a physique suggesting this guy doesn't take too many elevators. Mims took me into his teaching room, where there were four older computers and six state-of-the-art machines from the Bill and Melinda Gates Learning Foundation. The seven or eight women and one man seated at the terminals did not fit any profile you might have of an Internet generation.

"I didn't want to be left behind," said Judy Crosby, who has an 8-year-old granddaughter.

"I was laid off," Betty Johnson said. "My company said I didn't have the computer skills to compete and they didn't have the time to teach me." Today, she has those skills, a job with another company and more money.

Down the line the stories were similar. One was from a crossing guard; another from someone who worked at Tampa General Hospital. These seniors weren't going to give up to the Computer Age. On this day they were learning how to edit digital photographs. On other days they do spreadsheets and use e-mail. The little group in Progress Village writes soldiers in Bosnia.

Behind it all is Mims, a Notre Dame graduate who used to jump out of airplanes for the Army and came to Tampa as part of the Central Command at MacDill. Four mornings a week he is at the center working with seniors. And in the afternoons, he puts in another three hours with children.

"As long as they keep coming, I will be here," he said.

These days we hear a lot about racial profiling. Try profiling this guy into your memory bank.