

HU students help middle-schoolers navigate the jungle

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By Derrick Collins II

Camera phones flashed. Uncomfortably tightened braces adorned smiling white teeth. The aroma of crisp notebook paper and wooden pencils permeated the hall. The morning bell blared, signaling the start of the first day at Lindsay Middle School on Sept. 4.

Unbeknownst to the students, a surprise awaited just beyond the metallic blue doors. As each grade marched through the front entrance, Hampton University students were posted along the hallway to cheer them on, along with faculty and staff.

As parents and their eager sixth grade students burst through the doors, flooding the front entrance, they heard shouting: "Day by day, I wanna be a lion!"

The chant echoed through the yellow and blue brick halls, covered with murals of majestic lions, encouraging the young students to a jungle they will soon tame.

The event was sponsored by Hampton University's Greer Dawson-Wilson Student Leadership Training Program (SLP), and included Booker Elementary School and Lindsay and Benjamin Syms middle schools.

"I saw a light in those kids' faces," said Dr. Chevese Thomas, Principal of Lindsay Middle School. "Some of them don't get encouraged like this at home, so it really makes me feel good to see that they can look up to people like you."

Some staff and administration joined in with the chants. Assistant principal Mr. Deon Garner danced with the Student Leaders while cheering for the middle schoolers.

"It's a great thing you all are doing for these kids, we really appreciate you all," Garner said, before snapping a group picture with the student leaders.

Accompanying the students at Lindsay Middle School were a sea of parents and younger siblings, eager to watch the first day of middle school.

"The parents loved it," said senior Christian Caudle, the SLP student who organized the event. "They love recording moments like this and seeing that they have that older support from college students for their child."

Hampton junior Mia Luckett believes that being a positive example for the younger students may push them to want to succeed in school. Luckett was in the sixth grade hallway during the morning event.

"Hopefully us being there will let them know that school is a good thing," Luckett said. "I just want to make an impact on at least one kids' life."