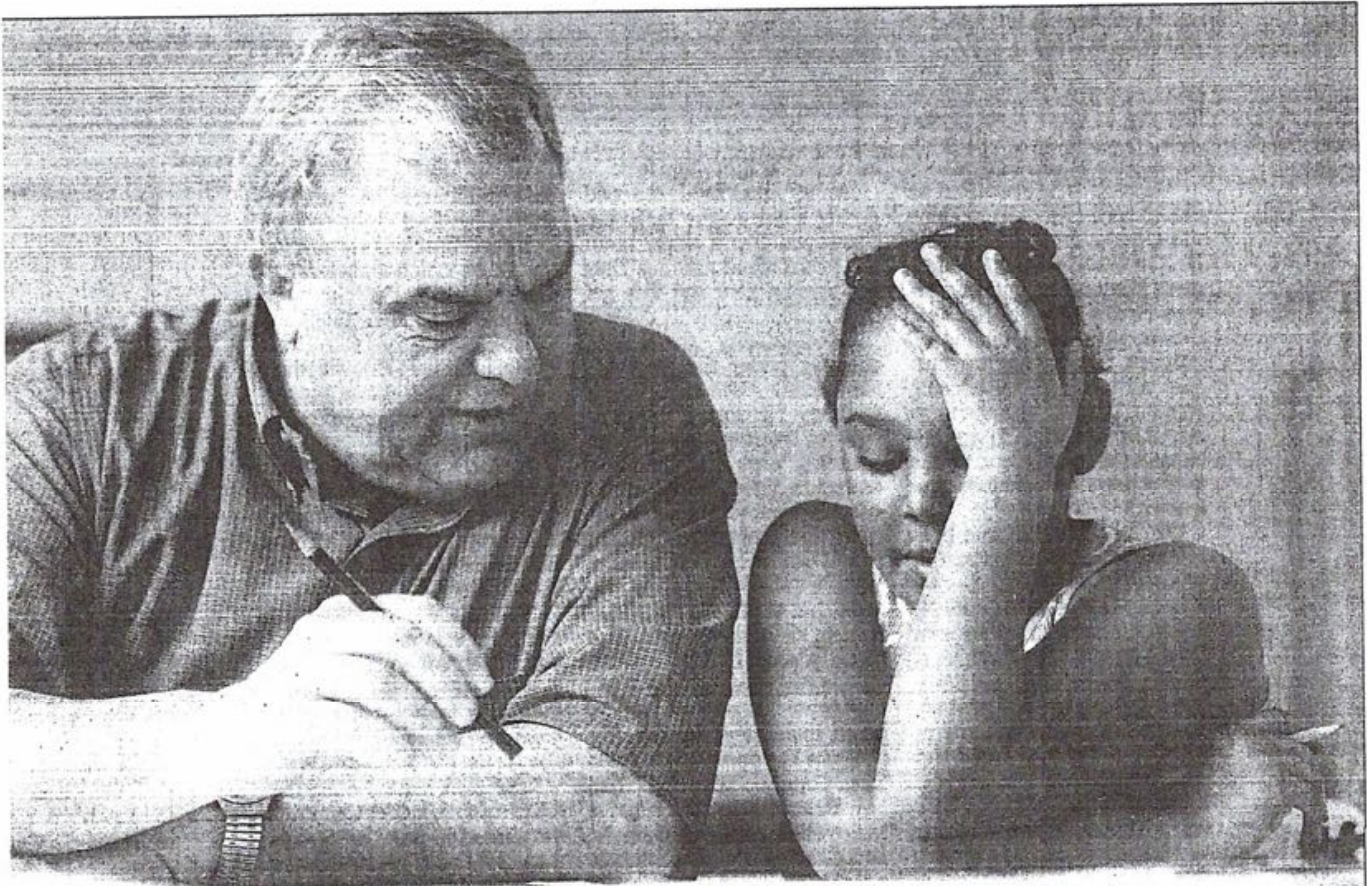


# A tutor on the next floor



DARREN BREEN / The Herald

Ed Daniels, 59, works with sixth-grader Jasmine Burrell during a tutoring session at the Whispering Pines apartment complex on Thursday. The program was started by retired elementary school principal Jan Link, who acquired a grant to get it going.

## ■ A program at a Lynnwood apartment complex keeps kids' minds working after school is over.

BY KAITLIN MANN  
*Herald Writer*

LYNNWOOD — Three teen boys walk into a small library at the Whispering Pines apartment complex, grab cookies and drop their bulky book bags to the floor.

School is over for the day. They are home.

And yet, they will spend the next hour, or two, or three, reviewing tips on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning and doing homework with teachers.

"So tell me about your WASL

tests," retired principal Jan Link asks.

"Easy," replies Harman Mahil, a seventh-grader at Alderwood Middle School.

"I did it in 20 minutes," brags eighth-grader Edgar Anthony. Link shakes her head.

"That's not a good sign," she says. "They give you all day."

At her tutoring business in Kirkland, Link charges \$40 an hour for one-on-one sessions.

Access to study tables costs \$18 an hour.

Since January, sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students at Whispering Pines have been getting the services free in what is likely the first apartment-based tutoring program in Snohomish County. Housing the program at an apartment complex makes it

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# Tutors: Kids close to home

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easier for kids to attend because they don't have to worry about finding rides home.

Link and others involved in the project would like to see similar programs at other apartment buildings in the area, but there's no funding.

The Whispering Pines program, called KITE, for Kids In Training to Excel, is set to end June 17, when the \$10,000 grant funding the project runs out.

"We started it as a pilot, but we don't have the funds to continue to support it for very long," said Jim Teverbaugh, executive director of Snohomish County Federated Health & Safety Network, the nonprofit group funding the program. "I just hope the program will be able to find ongoing support. It would be a shame to start it up and begin to demonstrate making a difference in the lives of these kids and then shut it down."

The 240 one- and two-bedroom apartments that make up Whispering Pines are nestled on a wooded lot off Highway 99, across the street from an auto parts junkyard. The apartments used to be the most run-down and crime-ridden in Lynnwood, until the Housing Authority of Snohomish County bought and renovated them in 1995, said executive director Bob Davis. Now the complex attracts mostly low-income, working families, he said.

In order to live there, tenants must earn less than 60 percent of the area's median income. A family of four could earn no more than \$50,000 a year to qualify.

Ann Imholt lives in Whispering Pines with her two middle-school-age daughters. She likes the tutoring program because it helps her girls finish their homework while killing time after school. A manager at McDonald's, she thought about sending



Jan Link tutors sixth-grader Carlos Escutia during the after-school tutoring program she started at a Lynnwood apartment complex.

DARREN BREEN  
The Herald

her daughters to a private tutor, but balked at the tuition fees.

"It's so expensive," she said during a visit to the makeshift classroom. "I'm a single mom and I can't afford tutoring. They like coming here and they get help."

A community group that operates under the Snohomish County Federated Health & Safety Network decided to start the tutoring program after spending years studying ways to reduce youth violence and substance abuse. The group focused the program on middle school students because they are vulnerable to drugs and violence, but tend to be receptive to help, Teverbaugh said. The group selected Link to organize the tutoring efforts.

A much larger apartment-based mentoring and tutoring program has operated in south King County since 1991. The New Futures organization has a \$1.6 million budget and serves about 200 kids of all ages through a variety of programs.

Elementary students who participate in the program show improvements on reading tests, while middle and high school students are 95 percent more likely to do their homework, said Sarah Schieron, director of development.

She didn't know of any other apartment-based programs in the region, and was glad to hear about KITE.

Around a dozen kids attend

tutoring sessions at Whispering Pines on Mondays and Thursdays beginning at 2:45 p.m. Sessions officially end three hours later, but most kids leave when they finish their homework.

Ned Daniels, a substitute teacher with the Edmonds School District, along with a high school tutor, help kids with their homework. Link comes once or twice a week to share study tips and to help teach.

She believes all kids would benefit from study session programs and hopes KITE will serve as an example for low-income developments and ritzy gated communities.

"The fallacy is to believe that just poor kids need help," she said. "Twenty-five percent of our kids are struggling to graduate from high school and a lot of them are not low functioning. They're not low income."

Since she's started attending KITE, seventh-grader Chloe Lee has turned in more homework than in the past. Her math grade has gone up from a C to a B and her English grade has improved from a B to an A-, she said.

Before the program, she'd try to do her homework when she got home from school, but, if she got stuck on a problem, she'd quit and turn on a scary movie. Now she asks Daniels or Link for help.

She finishes.

Like the other kids in KITE, Chloe hopes someone steps forward to continue funding the program.

"I'm kind of sad that it might end," she said, before leaving KITE for her apartment Thursday. "I might want help next year and I think other kids should get a chance to get help."

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