

Library-goers make some noise



More than 20 children and dancers came out to learn Ghanaian music to celebrate Black History Month last Friday.

Workshop takes West African song, dance to Stanford Warren

By Elise Clouser
THE DURHAM VOICE

A library's basement meeting room, with white walls and harsh fluorescent lighting, seems like an unlikely place to find a celebration of any kind. But in such a room last Friday morning, traditional West African dancing, singing and drumming brought the place alive.

Kwabena Osei Appiagyei, a Ghanaian musician, led the workshop on African music and dance at the Stanford L. Warren Branch of the Durham County Library. About 20 children, including kids from nearby day care centers, attended the lesson.

"We are taking a journey together to West Africa," Appiagyei announced to his audience. "Today, we are going to boogie!"

Appiagyei showed attendees dances, call-and-response songs and phrases in the Ghanaian language of Akan. Children played drums arranged in a semi-circle while Appiagyei and two others, McDan-

iel Roberts and LeBrandi Johnson, danced along. The teacher also gave a lesson on the various instruments used in West African music.

"I am a teacher, I teach music and dance," Appiagyei said. "This is what I do."

Appiagyei grew up in a family of musicians in Ghana. He now lives in Durham and is the musical director for the African American Dance Ensemble. The organization aims to preserve and share African and African-American dance traditions.

Appiagyei said that a major goal of the ensemble is to teach the public, especially young people, through workshops and performances.

"I educate and share traditions," Appiagyei said. "I go to schools and community events and hold workshops so others can learn about Africa."

Roberts, who performed with Appiagyei at the event, is a dancer with the African American Dance Ensemble. He said he began studying theater and dance at a young age.

"The dance community is my life, and I love being able to share my passion for it," Roberts said. "I can give back to the community by sharing the craft of music and theater with others."

Annette Weir of Little Faith Daycare brought her class of 3-year-olds to the workshop. She said the day care takes kids to educational or cultural events every week.

"This was wonderful because it had the children involved," Weir said. "It got them dancing and participating."

The event was part of the Durham County Library's programming for Black History Month. Throughout the month of February, Durham County Library has hosted various programs highlighting the cultural and historical contributions of Africans and African-Americans.

For information about upcoming events at the Stanford L. Warren Branch, visit <https://durhamcountylibrary.org/location/warren/>.