

Teen: 'What's going on?'



CRAIG S. McKIBBEN JR./Sun-Gazette

Tayshon B. Stelly performs his version of "What's Goin' On" in front of the Community Arts Center Thursday evening.

Rap lyrics spin positive vibe for youths

By BECKY LOCK
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A few months ago, Tayshon B. Stelly was sent on a mission — to look at what was happening in his community and describe it by composing lyrics for a song.

Loni Gamble, executive director of the Community Alliance for Progressive Positive Action, gave the 13-year-old city boy the song's title "What's Goin' On" and the music. He handed Tayshon the assignment of penning the lyrics to get a younger perspective.

"Kids are listening to a lot of negative types of music. It's egotistical and has no caring for the community," Gamble said.

"We wanted to try something different. Music can be educational, inspirational and fun to listen to."

Already there is a collaboration between the younger generation and the older, he said.

"The music has a nice jazzy feel to it, and (Tayshon) brings his own hip-hop flavor."

CAPPA presented a Young Artists in Action musical showcase June 11 at the Williamsport Area High School, and Stelly was one of the students who auditioned for it.

"When he came in to audition, he brought the hard-core rap music that he thinks I want to hear," Gamble said. "I told him, 'You hear that all the time. We're look-

ing for something different."

It took Tayshon just a few days to compile the lyrics.

"I sat down and wrote a list of all the things that I could talk about ... things going on in the world and in my community," he said.

Tayshon said he also thought about "people in my family, people dying because of gang violence."

The teen said he has been interested in songwriting for nearly half his life.

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"He's been writing songs since he was about 7 years old," said his mother, Tamika Stelly. "I'm very proud of him."

Her son sang "What's Goin' On" during the city's Fourth of July celebration and again Thursday during the Grand Slam parade in the city.

Gamble said the composition soon will be played on local college radio stations. In addition, he is arranging for Tayshon to perform the song in area schools and at First Friday festivities.

"We're starting locally, then taking it regional and maybe statewide and national," Gamble said. "It's going to make an impact."

"I think it will attract more youths to the program. We can reach a lot more kids, get them engaged and off the streets."

Tayshon, who turns 14 next month, said he also thinks that society can change its ways and that people can find solutions to the problems that plague their cities.

"There are ways that people can change," he said. "I hope that they will listen to these lyrics and will change what they're doing."

His mother said the song "sends a good message" about young people and their music.

"Since he joined CAPPA, he's been given the opportunity to show what he has and do it in a positive way," she said.

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