

## **Racial 'humor' at ARC**

by : Murfee Faulk

AUGUSTA, GA - Kids will do the dumbest things. Like starting a "White Power" club at the local high school.

Students at the Academy of Richmond County High School formed a "White Power" club on the social networking site Facebook a few weeks back in what they said was a "prank." The prank was so authentic, members gave themselves nicknames such as "Cross Lighter" and "Hanger (the person that puts the rope over their head)."

Facebook received complaints that the site violated its policy on offensive speech and last week they took the site down.

"We began to look into it, but then [the site] disappeared from Facebook," said Assistant Superintendent of School Improvement Pat Burau. Burau said there is a limit to how the school district can control the use of a school's name.

School District Superintendent Dr. Dana Bedden agreed. Without a clear indication that the educational environment is harmed, there is little a school district can do, he said.

The academy student who reported the club to Facebook said the students defended their actions the following day as "not a big deal" and "just fun." There is no indication that the students met for any "White Power" activities other than their postings and message exchanges over Facebook.

Race relations are reportedly tense at the academy. Students tell the *Metro Spirit* that the black students were caught off guard with the "White Power" club. They had been "keeping to themselves" even before the obvious references to lynching, one source said.

At least one expert in hate groups says the Academy of Richmond County group is "perplexing."

"That's really unusual," said Heidi Beirich of the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Ala.

White power groups generally consist of lower class and lower-middle class misfits and dropouts, Beirich said, not solidly upper-middle class college students at ARC who take Advanced Placement classes and play on the soccer team.

An Aryan Nation high school club that was brought to the attention of the Southern Poverty Law Center was considerably less genteel than ARC's almost dilettantish approach to white pride.

And not all of the 10 members involved in the "White Power" club were current students. Three of the 10 members were listed as 2006 graduates of the academy. Three others were listed as belonging to the class of 2008. Four members were from the class of 2009.