

The Persuasions: Old School R&B with a twist

by TORI BOONE

Staff Writer

Kenan Auditorium opened its doors last Thursday night for musical sextet the Persuasions. The performance began at 8 p.m. The musical group, which consists of Jerry Lawson, Jayotis Washington, Joe Russell, Jimmy Hayes, Raymond Sanders and B.J. Jones, have been together for 38 years and have released 25 albums. They are famous for singing all their music a capella, without instrumental music.

The Persuasions formed in 1962 in Brooklyn, N.Y. They met playing basketball. After playing, they sang together and realized they could harmonize.

Lawson pointed out at the beginning of the show that when they started 38 years ago, there was only one other a capella group in the United States. Now there are 760.

The impact of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the importance of Jesus came out in their performance. "When I think of one person I could compare Dr. King to, it would be Jesus," Lawson said. "Like Jesus, Dr. King wanted everyone to live together and be happy."

"Let me live in a house on the side of the road and be a friend to man" the group sang in a piece written as a tribute to Dr. King.

The energy and enthusiasm of the Persuasions on stage kept the audience clapping their hands and tapping their feet.

Their dancing surprised Wilmington resi-

dent Harry Davis. "I didn't think they could still kick it like that after all these years," he said.

The Persuasions sang several gospel songs, but they really got the crowd moving when they sang some old classics like "Under the Boardwalk" and "Some Kind of Wonderful."

Lawson said their favorite song to perform on stage is "The Lord's Prayer." "We always close with this because it shows our true beliefs and where we came from," he said.

The group has several upcoming projects. They just finished shooting "The Clef Notes," a movie co-starring Ray Charles. On March 4, the group's first gospel album *Sunday Morning Soul* will be released. On April 4, the band will release *Frankly A Capella*, a tribute to the late Frank Zappa. They did the tribute to Zappa because he signed them to their first record label in 1968.

The Persuasions ended the show with a rendition of the old classic, "In the Still of the Night." They managed to get most of the audience up on stage to help them sing it.

Stephania Jackson, vice president of the UNCW gospel choir introduced the group to the audience. "To be honest, I had never even heard of them before, but I think they're great," she said. "I just wish more people would have come."

Senior Michael Braxton also liked the show. "I felt privileged to hear some old



Kathryn Schley/The Seahawk

The Persuasions, one of the original a capella groups of the 1960's, treated an audience at Kenan Auditorium to an evening of gospel and old school R&B last Thursday.

school R & B. Now I see how a lot of groups can be influenced by them," he said.

Dr. Joanne Nottingham, director of minority affairs, brought the Persuasions to Kenan Auditorium. "I wanted to bring them here mainly to indicate the historical connection from the 60s to the year 2000," she said. "They've lasted through the years singing backup vocals for artists such as Bette Midler

and Stevie Wonder."

Dr. Nottingham also said students on campus showed a great interest in the Persuasions when she played some of their CD's for them. "I had black kids, white kids and Asian kids all listening to their music and they were all amazed they could sing so well without music," she said.

Leadership Center hosts "Young at Heart" social

by MEGAN O'BRIEN

A & E Editor

The Leadership Center will host the fifth "Young at Heart" social for area senior citizens Feb. 10 in the Warwick Center Ballroom. Area senior citizens from lower cost rest housing agencies will get the chance to socialize with their peers and young people.

"We're hoping to make connections with agencies where the need is really apparent," community service coordinator Becky Long said.

The senior citizens will arrive at 6:30 p.m. but volunteers are needed before that to decorate, as well as stay and socialize with the seniors.

"This is an event where we ask volunteers to come and dance, eat food and have fun," social co-chair Meg McCarry said. "There's a lot of cooperation from volunteers and excitement from seniors."

The idea behind the social is to get students involved in a one-time community service event.

"We're trying to get students, faculty and staff together with the community," Long said. "This is one way to get students involved and find out what groups they like working with."

"From my experience last year, [the best part] was right before the social started, working with the student volunteers," social co-chair Kim Brooks said. "I had some other stuff to do that afternoon, and when I came back they had everything decorated. I was only gone 30-40 minutes."

According to assistant director for leadership and volunteer programs Julie Owens, the ultimate

goal for the social would be to have 200 seniors and 175 student volunteers. That would fill the Warwick Center Ballroom. "I expect somewhere around 75 [seniors]," McCarry said. "A lot of the seniors can't come out because they go to bed before 6:30 p.m. Others aren't physically able to come out, but the ones who can are really excited."

In the past, there have been more students than seniors, and Owens expects to have an equally strong representation this year. "The response has been pretty good," she said. "The Spanish club is bringing 12 people."

The ratio of men to women has always been off. The volunteers are usually about 75 percent women, and the seniors are mostly women as well, since women live longer than men. The organizers said that they would really like more males to volunteer, so they could have the female senior citizens dance with men. "We encourage volunteers to talk to seniors and ask them to dance," Owens said.

The social started 5 years ago. "It was started by a student who recognized that we should bring seniors to campus and interact with students," Owens said.

The music for the social has always been provided by Nik's Orchette. Bandleader Nik Ponos has played in the Wilmington area for 40 years. "We were looking for a band that would appeal to that [older] generation," Owens said. "He's not just a singer, he's truly entertainer. He makes this a special event for us."

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