

Community Icons Join Forces M & F Bank & NC Mutual Insurance Company Show Commitment to Delta Fine Arts

By Paula McCoy

Two minority-owned businesses in the East Winston community came together to provide a gift to the Delta Fine Arts Center. Mechanics and Farmers Bank and North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company gifted \$5000 to the center to help them reach their first milestone of a \$1million dollar fundraising campaign that began December 2001. Their first milestone of \$325,000 enabled the art center to purchase the ABC store on New Walkertown Road. Two other phases will upfit the building (\$415,000) and provide an endowment and general operating funds (\$260,000). "Receiving support from these two businesses of long-standing in the community has been significant," says Simona Allen, center volunteer and board member; "each contribution helped us reach our ultimate goal."

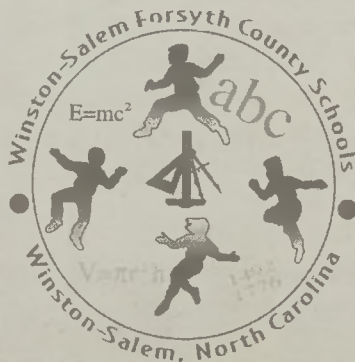
"The Delta Fine Arts Center is a landmark in the community," says Evelyn Acree, city executive for Mechanics & Farmers Bank. "Keeping this center in East Winston is important for all of us." The ABC Store facility would provide a new location for the center and expand the existing capacity of the eighty-year old cottage facility that the center has existed in for twenty years. "We own few institutions," says Acree, "particularly those that house our art, culture and history. We must do whatever we can to preserve them and leave a legacy for our youth, our future."

Ben Ruffin, chairman of Mechanics & Farmer and a board member for twenty-five years, played an instrumental role in bringing the two institutions together. "Anyplace that houses our history in a positive way we ought to do whatever we can to maintain and support them," he says. Ruffin is also a five-year board member of NC Mutual Insurance Company. "Mechanics and Farmers Bank and NC Mutual have been two institutions that have supported black causes and the whole community throughout their long history; this was a natural thing for them to do," says Ruffin.

The Delta Fine Arts Center, which has always impressed residents with their exhibits and with the community usage of the facility, will be able to provide more exhibit space and community room for classes. "Our new facility will seat up to 50 people and expand our exhibit capacity to three times more than our existing facility," says Dianna Caesar, Executive Director of the center and widow of actor Adolph Caesar.

Since its founding in 1972, non-profit Winston-Salem Delta Fine Arts, Inc., has provided our area with quality educational and cultural programming. Delta's goal is to stimulate community interest and pride in American arts and humanities, emphasizing the contributions of African Americans. In 1982, the organization opened The Delta Arts Center, where programs are offered in the visual arts, music, literature, drama, history, and folk arts. Offerings include year-round visual arts and historical exhibitions, visiting artist programs, workshops, lectures, films, performances, and special projects.

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