

# Helms speaks to youth at Boys Club

▲ Former Houston Rockets player tells how drugs destroyed his basketball career

By YVETTE N. FREEMAN  
Community News Editor

For four years, 10 months, and two hours, Mike Helms experienced a "Hell on Earth." During that time, the former Houston Rockets basketball player was in prison, serving out a 16-year sentence for drug trafficking and possession of cocaine. He was also an addict with a \$700 a day addiction to the drug.

That bout with drugs and the law ended his professional basketball career. At the same time, it allowed him to start a new life and a new career — without drugs — and to share his experiences with young people in an effort to prevent them from using drugs.

Helms was in Winston-Salem last Thursday to tell his story at the Salvation Army Boys Club on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. He was the guest speaker for the Power Summer Basketball Tip-Off, a program for junior and high school boys.

"Young people, wake up and know, that there is a hell on Earth," said Helms. "And it doesn't matter whether you're black, white, rich or poor, Catholic or Baptist. If you break the law, then you're going to pay a price."

A native of Bassett, Virginia, Helms was a high school All-American basketball player, listed among the top 50 high school players in the country. He attended Wake Forest

University, where he was also a basketball star, becoming a member of the 1,000 point club. That talent on the court led to him being the NBA draft pick for the Houston Rockets, before earning his college degree.

According to Helms, he had the perfect life — nice clothes, fancy cars, and plenty of money. That perfect life soon ended when some friends introduced him to cocaine and he became addicted.

But instead of getting professional help, he began selling the drug, which led to his arrest and a two-year prison sentence. However, being behind bars didn't stop his drug use, and he was caught again. An additional 14 years was added to his sentence.

Looking back over his years in prison, Helms, 32, told the audience of over 100 kids that, "No feeling I ever got while I was high, is going to erase the pain I feel inside me everyday; the pain of having to watch my mom walk away from me in prison with tears in her eyes wondering why; and the pain of knowing that if I had kept my mind straight and my body physically right, perhaps I could still be playing with the likes of the James Worthy's of the world."

He encouraged the kids that getting an education is the best route to success, and cited how he himself returned to Wake Forest last September and received his degree. He is now an employee of Sara Lee Corporation in Martinsville, Virginia, but he still makes time for public appearances.

"I do quite a bit of public speaking to provide young people with an example of what can happen if they make the wrong decisions," Helms said during an interview following the event. "Basically, what I'm hoping to do is provide them with a concrete example of what can happen. I'm talking from experience, and I'm hoping that based on that, they'll make wiser decisions than what I made, and

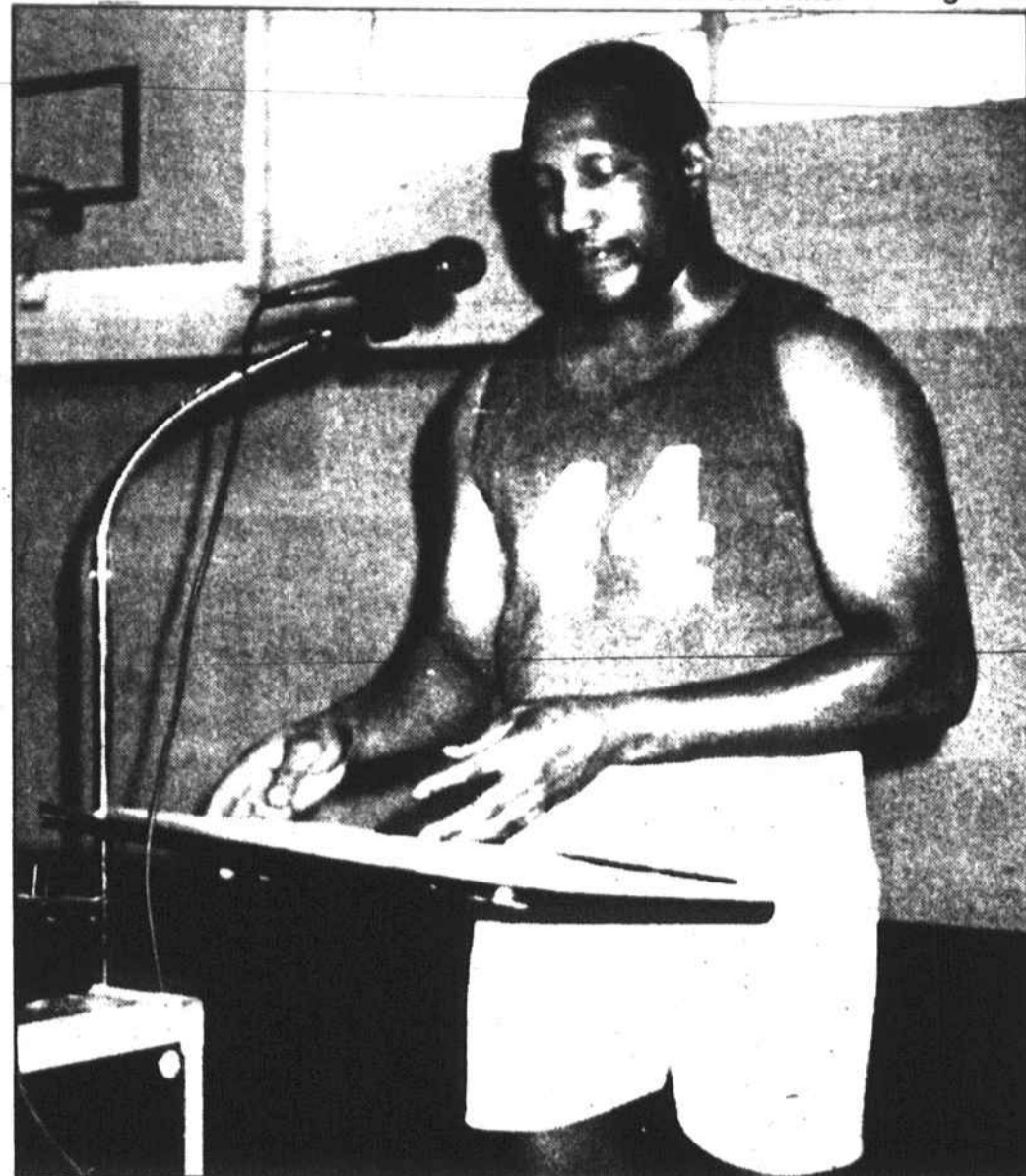
perhaps not fall into the same rut that I fell into because of those decisions."

James Smith, the program night manager, at the Boys Club, hopes that the young men and women in the audience, will take heed to Helms' testimony.

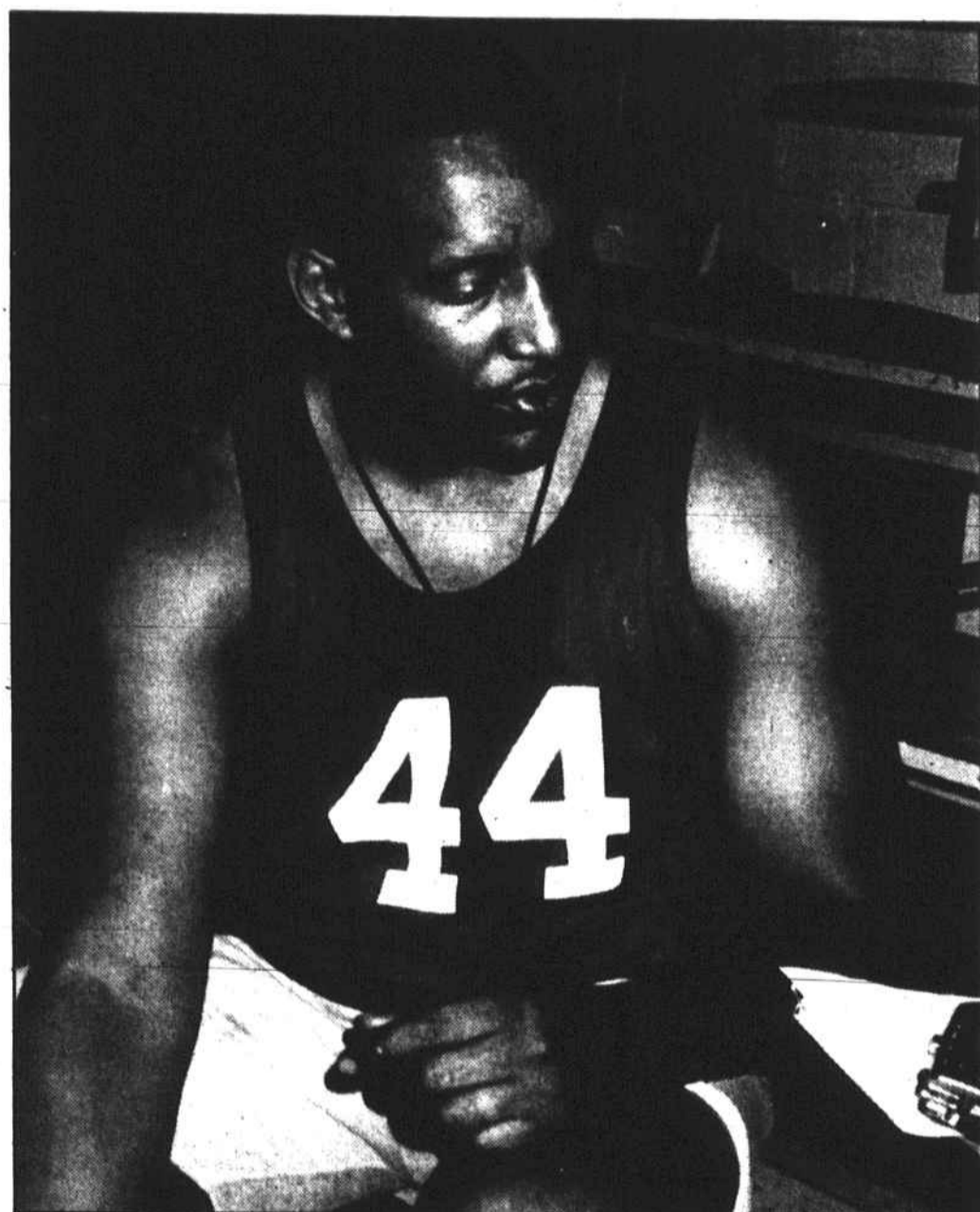
"Hopefully, it'll straighten some of them out to see that the road Mr. Helms took was the wrong road, and hopefully they can correct themselves by learning from somebody else's mistakes," said Smith.

Bill McClain, the former athletic director at the Boys Club, who invited Helms to speak at the event, agreed and said that Helms took the glamour out of drug use.

"I thought he did an excellent job in showing them that it's not a glamorous experience," he said. "Quite often, because young people see the gold and the money, they see drugs as a glamorous thing. He did a very effective job in letting them know that the glamour ends pretty fast."



Mike Helms told youth at the Boys Club how drugs destroyed his professional basketball career.



Mike Helms hopes that kids who hear his anti-drug message won't make the same mistakes he did.

## Boys Club Power Basketball Program begins

Over 100 young men participated in the Power Summer Basketball Tip-Off Program last Thursday, June 18, at the Salvation Army Boys Club on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. Sponsored by the Boys Club and the Winston-Salem Housing Authority, the program, which will run Monday through Friday from 5-9 p.m., provides a summer activity for young men in junior high and high school that includes more than just sports. "What we are providing for them is an alternative that gives them something positive," said Bill McClain, former athletic director of the Boys Club. This program is multi-faceted, not just basketball. There's weightlifting. There's assistance, where if a young person comes to us with a personal problem, we try to steer them where they can get assistance, whether it's academics, whether it's something relating to the law, or even a health problem."

During the tip-off, which was held from 6-9 p.m., the young men participated in several competitive activities, such as a free throw contest, a three-point shoot out, one-on-one games, and a slam dunk contest. Steve Hood, a former Winston-Salem State University basketball player, and Mike Helms, a former player for the Houston Rockets, also spoke to the kids.

"I think one of the most important things this program does is bridge the gap between different sectors in the city," said James Smith, the night program manager at the Boys Club. "And it does so by bringing kids together in a positive manner, where they interact with each other and have something positive to do, other than in a negative manner where they're hurting one another and destroying one another."

Art Milligan, executive director of the Housing Authority, agreed and said "I'm happy to see all these brothers together working to make something happen. I always hear people talking about black males and how we're not doing this and we're not doing that. We have an example of black males coming together to make something happen, and I think the Housing Authority in conjunction with the Boys Club, can make some positive things happen in our neighborhoods."

The winners of the various contests were: Rob Flake, slam dunk contest; Lendell Wagner, senior three-point shoot-out; Chris Jackson, junior three-point shoot-out; Charles Ingram and Rashaard Shepherd, free throw contest; and Anthony Caldwell, senior one-on-one game; and Baron Dubose, junior one-on-one game.

### Community

# EVENTS CALENDAR June-July

**How to Schedule Your Event:** Send your information, concisely and neatly printed or typed, to the *Chronicle* Calendar, 617 N. Liberty St., Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102, before 5:30 p.m. the Monday preceding the week in which your event will occur. Our FAX number is (919) 723-9173.

#### THURSDAY, JUNE 25

9 a.m. — The Forsyth Unit of the American Cancer Society is holding its Jail-A-Thon through Friday, June 26, until 5 p.m. at Hanes Mall, Center Court. To schedule an arrest, or for more information, call 768-1224.

10:30 a.m. — Historic Bethabara Park and Teen's Country Herb Shop will present a seminar entitled "All About Herbs" in the Visitor Center of the Park, 2147 Bethabara Rd. The program is free and open to the public. Seating is limited, and reservations can be made by calling 924-8191.

2 p.m. — The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive at the WS Masonic Bodies Masonic Temple, Miller St., until 7 p.m.

4 p.m. — Floyd Davis of the United Way of Forsyth County will present "Committed to Helping People" at the Neighborhood Government Services Office, 2301 N. Patterson Ave. The program is free and open to the public.

#### FRIDAY, JUNE 26

2:30 p.m. — The Special Populations & Programs Unit of the WS Recreation & Parks Dept. will sponsor the Annual Summer Bingo Party for Seniors at the Benton Convention Center until 5 p.m. Admission is free.

7:30 p.m. — The Nature Science Center of Forsyth County is continuing its monthly Sky-Watch program at Winston-Salem State University's Hill Lecture Hall. The program is free and open to the public.

#### SATURDAY, JUNE 27

8 a.m. — Vicki Moody-Chandler will hold a moving-garage sale at her home, 4848 Barkas Dr., until 2 p.m.

8:30 a.m. — The Special Populations & Programs Unit of the WS Recreation & Parks Dept. will sponsor Adventure by Design Ropes Course until 4:30 p.m. at Salem Lake, 1001 Salem Lake Rd. The cost is \$25 per person. To register, call 727-2505. Space is limited, participants will be accepted on a first paid, first serve basis only.

2 p.m. — The WS Housing Authority in partnership with the City of WS, will sponsor "Community Day with Ray" at the Dixie Classic Fairgrounds and the Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum Annex. The event is a celebration honoring Ray Agnew Jr., a professional football player with the New England Patriots. There will be food, music and an exhibition basketball game. The cost is \$1.50. Proceeds will help establish a scholarship for children in public housing.

7 p.m. — Piedmont Craftsmen will present Part I of the New Members Show 1992 today through July 12. An opening of the exhibition will be held until 9 p.m. tonight at 1204 Reynolda Rd. The public is invited. Admission is free.

#### SUNDAY, JUNE 28

1:30 p.m. — The 15th annual Old-Fashioned Independence Day Celebration will be held at Historic Bethabara Park until 4:30 p.m. The program is free and open to the public. For more information, call 924-8191.

— The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive at Goler Metropolitan Church, 1435 E. 4th St., until 6 p.m.

2:30 p.m. — The Winston-Triad Lupus Chapter will meet in the Activity Building of Highland Presbyterian Church, 2329 Cloverdale Ave. Dr. Joseph Jorizzo, head of the Dept. of Der-

matology at Bowman Gray School of Medicine, will discuss "The Many Varied Aspects of Skin Involvement in Lupus and Related Diseases." The program is free and open to the public. For more information, call 768-1493.

4 p.m. — An AIDS Benefit Concert will take place at Emmanuel Baptist Church, 1705 Shalimar Dr. Capital City Five of Raleigh, N.C. and Vergie Collins of WS, will be the featured guests.

#### MONDAY, JUNE 29

10 a.m. — The Special Populations & Programs Unit of the WS Recreation & Parks Dept. will sponsor a Cross Stitch Class at the Bee Hive, 1601 Mt. Zion Place, through Aug. 17. The program fee is \$1.50 and the cost of supplies. There is no charge for seniors 60 and over. For more information, call 727-2505 or 727-8142.

2:30 p.m. — Art Milligan of the WS Housing Authority will present "New and Improved Housing Programs" at the Neighborhood Government Services Office, 2301 N. Patterson Ave. The program is free and open to the public.

#### TUESDAY, JUNE 30

11 a.m. — Dorothy Graham Wheeler of the Best Choice Center will present "Parental Involvement" at the Neighborhood Government Services Office, 2301 N. Patterson Ave. The program is free and open to the public.

7:30 p.m. — The championship 13-year-old Winston-Salem Lakers will sponsor a benefit basketball game at the Winston Lake YMCA.

Please see page B6



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