

Winston Lake YMCA Hopes To Stem Erosion

By SHERIDAN HILL
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Eight years ago, there was much excitement about the opening of the Winston Lake YMCA.

The \$3.1 million facility, with its six-lane, heated swimming pool, handball and basketball courts and fully equipped weight-training center, sits on 11 acres bordering the picturesque 450-acre Winston Lake Park.

A year after it opened, enrollment reached its peak with 1,415 members. But since June 1986, membership has steadily dropped. And today, the YMCA has only 534 members, despite an initial feasibility study that indicated 2,000 potential members.

Why then is membership so far below potential?

"You answer that one and you've solved a riddle," said Brian Cormier, chief executive officer of the four YMCAs of Greater Winston-Salem. "It's not because we don't have a quality facility. It's not because we don't have quality programs. It's not lack of minority input."

Marcelle Orange, hired in 1991 as director of the Winston Lake YMCA, vows to improve membership. Orange said one of her biggest obstacles was to destroy the perception that the area is crime-ridden.

"When I came here, people told me stories about things that happened out here, but those things aren't happening today," said Orange, referring to instances of crime that had occurred in the area. "I feel very safe out here."

She might also want to attract

members of the downtown Central YMCA, which, Cormier said, has nearly 1,000 black members.

Why aren't they members at Winston Lake? Ben Ruffin, a Winston Lake YMCA board member, has his own idea as to why.

"People don't know the Winston Lake Y is competitive," he said. "The facility is superb. The equipment is modern, and you don't have to stand in line to use it."

He said blacks should join the YMCA to serve as role models to the hundreds of youths that use the facility daily.

"The real question about this Y is not why aren't more black people members, but why aren't we as black men volunteering and taking on some of these kids," he said. "We need to become involved in the work of the Y."

Cormier said nearly 80 percent of the kids who attend programs at the Winston Lake Y are from single-parent families.

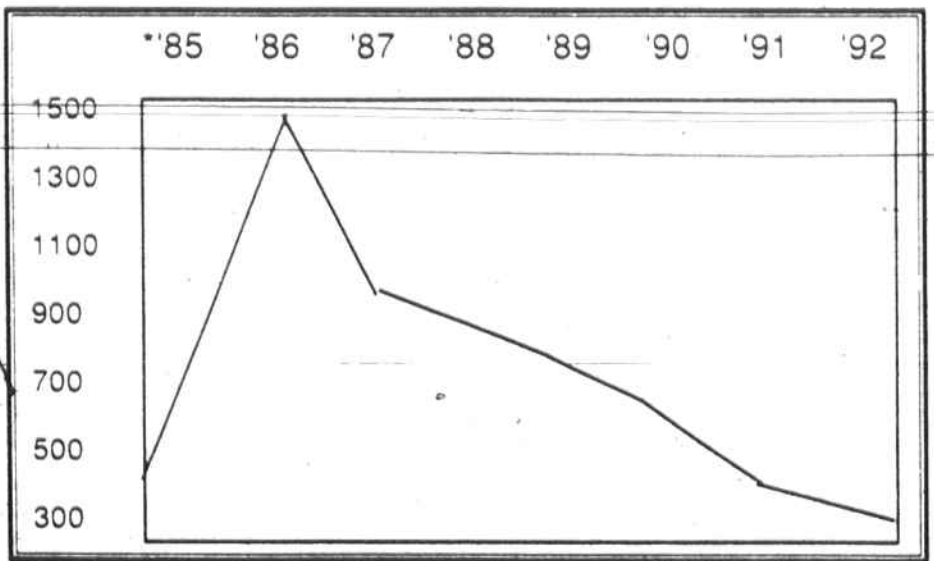
Nigel Alston, also a board member and who serves on the membership committee, said the Winston Lake Y is an overlooked gold mine in a beautiful setting.

"Right next door, you've got the park; you've got Winston Lake Estates and the new development, Lake Park Estates, both over the \$100,000 price range," he said. "They're attracting higher income families. And it's a fabulous facility." Cormier says the YMCA has the services and facilities to attract a solid membership.

Transportation shouldn't be a problem, Cormier says, because of public transportation. Transportation is also provided at some neighborhoods for summer day camp and after-school child care.

Officials do not think it is membership fees that have eroded enrollment. The new member fee at Winston Lake is half (\$25) that of other branches and one-fourth that of the Central YMCA (\$100). The monthly adult membership fee at Winston Lake is \$20, compared with \$23 at the Kernersville branch and \$26 at the downtown branch. A child's membership is \$5 month.

Winston Lake has also received improvements totaling \$300,000, which include a hardwood gym



Marcelle Orange, director of the Winston Lake Family YMCA, said she wishes that the community would recognize "the quality, commitment and integrity that is displayed throughout our YMCA."

floor, glass backboards, a hardwood aerobics floor, a youth-center room and an upgraded Nautilus weight-training equipment room. The men's and women's locker rooms have been remodeled to include showers, a whirlpool, sauna and a steam room.

Cormier said the YMCA organization has provided financial support to the Winston Lake branch.

"We have eliminated 100 percent of our United Way support to our central branch and redirected that money to the Winston Lake Y for scholarships," Cormier said. "We have cut the budget at other branches and directed that money to

Winston Lake. In fact, the only budget increases we requested this year were for the Winston Lake Y."

He added that 12 percent of the organization's 1992 funding was produced by United Way. Of that, 70 percent went to the Winston Lake YMCA. "I wish someone could tell me what the problem is," he said. "Only a small percentage of the adult minority membership is interested in supporting the branch in their own community. We raised the money, built the facility, put in the programs the community suggested, but ... it's not a bottomless pit. The community has to support it."

6 Directors Not Members At Y

As the Winston Lake Family YMCA launches its membership drive, six members of the group's Board of Directors either have memberships at other clubs or none at all.

Marcelle Orange, director of the YMCA, said a membership was not required to serve on the board. She said board members contributed to the YMCA in ways other than financial. She said she would not ask those serving who do not have a membership to resign.

A board members' duty, among other things, is to offer input that might help increase enrollment.

One board member who does not have a membership admitted that he was a setting a bad example.

Rembert Malloy, who said he served on the board with an active membership for 17 years from 1944 to 1957, said he rejoined the board several years ago but did not reactivate his membership.

"I'm guilty," he said when contacted this week. "I'm setting a bad example. I think it's a shame that I and others on the board don't have a membership. I

think out of loyalty every board member should have a membership. I think that each person who comes on the board should be asked to join."

The other board members without memberships at the Winston Lake YMCA are Nigel Alston, Larry Butler, Jean Irvin, James Rousseau and Claudette Weston. Alston, Rousseau and Weston belong to the Central YMCA.

"I am not a member and I have no reason," Weston said. "My real thrust over there is young people. I work with AAU basketball and raise money for membership scholarships. I've been so active with the Y and with my new business, that I don't leave the office until nine o'clock. They laugh at me at central because I've held a membership for two years but haven't worked out."

Irvin said she has had a membership at the Winston Lake YMCA for the past four years, but did not renew her membership when it expired in December.

Alston and Rousseau could not be reached for comment.

YMCA Programs

It's not that people don't use the Winston Lake YMCA — they're just not members.

Programs offered there serve an estimated 4,500 people each year.

On any given weekend, the basketball courts are filled with wide-eyed, enthusiastic youths. Structured health and sports programs include aerobics, senior stretch, basketball, racquetball and swimming lessons for all ages.

Youth programs include the Black Achievers, Kadets Marching Team, drill team, majorettes, cheerleading, community incentive and community choir.

In addition to structured programs, the YMCA is used for:

- practice site for high school swim teams
- two Head Start classrooms
- meeting site for senior citizens groups
- voting precinct
- weightlifting competition
- racquetball competition
- regional Amateur Athletics Union basketball program
- Bridge Club meetings
- fraternity, sorority meetings site

Lawyers Ask High Court for Retrial

An investigator working for Hunt's attorney's, the documents say, could not find McBride for Hunt's 1990 re-trial. Shortly before the second trial, McBride was serving time in the Forsyth County Jail, and according to the documents, two detectives from the police department told her boyfriend that "the best thing he could do was to get Lisa out of town" once she got out of jail.

A month before the trial began, McBride and her boyfriend went to West Virginia, the court documents said.

Winston-Salem Police Chief George Sweat would not comment on the allegations in the documents. However, Claire McNaught, the department's attorney, said that the state has been provided with affidavits from the detectives refuting the charges.

Hunt, now 27, was convicted in 1985 and is serving a life sentence at Caledonia Correctional Facility in Tillery in the killing of Sykes, who

was a copy editor for the Winston-Salem Sentinel, which no longer exists. She was attacked around 6 a.m. on Aug. 10, 1984, while walking from her car to the newspaper's offices. Autopsy results indicated she had been stabbed, raped and sodomized.

"The murder itself sort of shook up the city," said Larry Little, a city lawyer and professor at Winston-Salem State University. "And after Hunt got arrested, not too much was said."

Little said there were things about the case that he found troubling, including the prosecution's key witness, Johnny Gray.

According to the documents introduced yesterday, Gray, who is serving a 53-year sentence for murder in an unrelated case, told another inmate he had killed Sykes. The inmate, identified in the court documents as Damen Vega, told Hunt what he had learned from Gray.

Vega and the other three

would-be witnesses have given sworn affidavits in which they claim Gray confessed to the killing. Gray used the name of a friend of Hunt's when he initially called the police about a suspect in 1984. Gray later admitted he used someone else's name when he called the police. The documents say Gray discussed with another prosecution witness the identity of the man he finally picked out of a line up. That man was

Hunt.

Sendor refused to comment on what motive city officials might have in sending an innocent man to prison. But Little, who helped form the Darryl Hunt Defense Committee that raised \$50,000, said local officials were interested in "saving face."

"I've put more time in this case than I have in anything in my life," Little said.

BLACK HISTORY
is every month,
week after week,
in the
Winston-Salem Chronicle

National NEWS



Black History Month Opening

GLENDALE, Calif. — Singer Lou Rawls, right, and actress Denise Nichols, explain to Julian Davidson the Zimbabwe Shona sculpture entitled "Spirits in Stone" at an African art exhibit at the Glendale Galleria in Glendale, Calif. The exhibit is being shown to mark Black History Month.

Thousands To Share \$105 Million Settlement

MIAMI — An estimated 40,000 blacks will share in a landmark \$105 million settlement of a discrimination suit against the giant Shoney's restaurant chain. The firm, which began as Bob's Big Boy, operates nearly 800 restaurants in 35 states under various names. A federal court in Miami determined that the chain had "systematically engaged in racial discrimination" by hiring blacks to only work in the kitchen and refusing to promote those who should have advanced.

Jackson Questions Schott Punishment

CHICAGO — National black political leader Jesse Jackson has charged that major league baseball's recent punishment of Cincinnati Reds owner Marge Schott "did not go far enough." Schott was suspended from baseball for one year and fined \$25,000 for making racial slurs, including referring to some of her well-paid black players as "my million-dollar niggers." But, Jackson says the matter cannot be settled until baseball hires more black managers and put "more African Americans in the front office." He has threatened to lead boycotts of baseball games this spring if more is not done.

Court Allows Race-Biased Scholarships

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court recently affirmed the government's authority to allow tax-supported colleges to continue granting scholarships that primarily benefit blacks and other racial minorities. The practice had been challenged as a form of reverse discrimination against whites and the Bush administration had tried to end the practice. But the three-judge U.S. Appeals Court dismissed the lawsuit filed by seven white students. The Clinton administration is not expected to challenge the decision. There are an estimated 45,000 minority-based scholarships designed primarily to help African Americans, Hispanics and Indians.

New Study: AIDS Is Not A Black Disease

WASHINGTON — A new report by the highly prestigious National Research Council has indirectly contradicted recent attempts to portray AIDS as becoming increasingly a disease of blacks and other racial minorities. While not directly addressing that issue, the 300-page report concluded: "The AIDS epidemic will have little impact on the lives of most Americans." The council added "the epidemic has had little effect on American society as a whole." The report noted that the greater incidence of HIV infection among blacks has occurred almost exclusively among black gay men and IV drug users. Blacks not in those two groups have been little affected. Further, the report concludes that people who are not in those two high risk categories "probably will never be affected." The National Research Council is part of the National Academy of Sciences and has been chartered by Congress to provide specific advice to the government.

Arthur Ashe: An AIDS Tragedy

NEW YORK — The AIDS-related death of tennis champion Arthur Ashe symbolized one of the most tragic aspects of the dreaded disease — people who contracted the AIDS virus as a result of blood transfusions. It is believed Ashe became infected during a transfusion needed during a 1983 open heart surgery. The Richmond, Va. native was 49 years old.

Famous Desegregation Judge Dies

HOUSTON — John R. Brown, a federal judge who played a major role in court battles that ended official segregation in the South, died in Houston this month at 83. He wrote nearly 2,000 opinions starting in 1962 with the order allowing James Meredith to be enrolled in the then all-white University of Mississippi.

More Blacks To Join 'Talk Show' Confusion

NEW YORK — Led by Oprah and Donahue, America is currently beset with 16 different syndicated television talk-shows. Nevertheless, later this year at least three more will join the competition for sensationalism. And, two of the new shows will have black hosts. Motivational speaker Les Brown and college professor Bertice Berry will be jumping into the fray by early September. The talk-shows have come under criticism for sensationalism and exploiting the situations of neurotic people. Brown says that he promised to use his show to inspire people.

Black Credit Guide Available

WASHINGTON — Responding to a recent government report showing that increasing numbers of Africans Americans are unable to qualify for government loans because of past problems, a black self-help group has compiled a "Credit Repair Guide" which shows people how to legally re-establish positive credit. Guide Editor James Nathan explained, "Negative credit is turning millions of blacks into second-class financial citizens. This discrimination needs to end." The guide is available from the non-profit Better Life Club, P.O. Box 28422, Washington, D.C. 20038. Interested persons are asked to include \$2 to cover postage and handling.