

# COMMUNITY FOCUS

Winston-Salem Greensboro High Point

The Choice for African American News

DECEMBER 21, 2000



## Carolin' Crusade



*East Winston group sings its way into residents' hearts*

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

For members of the East Winston Restoration Association, spreading Christmas joy to those who most need it has become an unofficial prong of the organization's mission.

Members have gathered each December for more than a decade to travel to various nursing homes in East Winston, singing spirited Christmas carols and handing out certificates to homes they pass on the way with stellar Christmas decorations.

The tradition continued last Friday evening. The group invited me to tag along. As in previous years, I was expected to put my camera down during some stops and join the group for a few tunes.

Many familiar faces were back this year for the ritual. Lois Hanes, the president of the association, volunteers her home for the meeting place and starting point. Ola Ashford brought along lyrics to several popular songs for those of us who tend to hum lyrics we are unsure of. She also brought along her husband, Willie, to add some bass to the makeshift choir. Alderwoman Joycelyn Johnson directed us to our various stops while Luther Jones drove the church van we called home for about three hours.

"I look forward to this every year," Hanes said before the ball got rolling. "I love when the people really enjoy what we do."

The Golden Lamb Nursing Home was our first stop. It was decided that we would leave a little early this year so that we would catch the residents at the center before they went to bed. The last two years, we sang as we walked up and down the hallways of the center because residents were already tucked away for the night.

This time, however, we found a captive audience as soon as we walked in — several ladies sitting in a row, waiting for their baths. The group began to sing. I took pictures. It wasn't long before the seniors began to join in.

Johnson asked for requests after the group had finished singing a few tunes. Asking residents for requests and items on their Christmas lists has become customary for the alderwoman, as has leaving a fresh, colorful poinsettia at each nursing home that they visit.

We stopped next at Dogwood Family Care, a few minutes away. This small center had many residents who remember the group members from previous years and look forward to their performance. Again,

the residents sang along with us. (I sang a few notes this time...It wasn't pretty).

We got a treat ourselves at Dogwood. We met Arthur Peoples, a 105-year-old resident at the home. Peoples, a very young looking 105, greeted us warmly. One of the care givers at the center said despite his age, Peoples is as sharp as a needle.

When I asked him the secret to his longevity, he summed it up like this: chasing women, not drinking and praying.

New Beginnings Assisted Living Center was our next stop. Many of the faces there I recognized from past years. And one of the songs we sang there, "Go Tell It on the Mountain," I remember humming to last year as Johnson did an impressive job leading.

We sang that song and other spirituals at the nursing homes. One resident in particular was in the mood to hear spirituals, as opposed to carols, and the group graciously obliged her. The residents hated to see us go, but one member of the group assured them that there would be more songs next year.

After a brief stop at Sims Recreation Center in Happy Hill Garden, where the annual Peace Toys for War Toys program was being held, we handed out a few certificates to owners of homes with beautiful Christmas decorations.

The selection process is intense. The group drives up and down streets in Johnson's East Ward, which unbelievably stretches nearly into Kernersville. Preliminary choices are put on a short list and then are narrowed down to the absolute best. We stop, Johnson signs one of the fancy looking certificates and knocks on the door to present it to the inhabitants.

The last nursing home was the one at Oak Summit. The nursing home is far from Johnson's ward, but it is home to one of East Winston's own, Mary Sloan Jones.

"Ms. Jones was one of the first community advocates in East Winston....She was instrumental in getting the spotlight at Trade a 1 Northwest," Johnson told me as we walked to Jones' room.

Jones was all smiles to see us. Johnson reminded her that she had a birthday coming up. The group treated her to an early birthday present, a rendition of "Silent Night" that she truly seemed to enjoy. She was also given a poinsettia, which she eyed appreciatively for some time.

Before we left, she said that the children back in the neighborhood need people to look out for them. Johnson promised to relay her message throughout her ward.



Residents at Golden Lamb Nursing Home sing along.



Lois Hanes shakes hands with residents after singing carols.



Carolers meet Arthur Peoples, who is 105, during one of the stops.



Alderwoman Joycelyn Johnson talks to residents.



Willie and Ola Ashford sing their hearts out.



Residents at New Beginnings Nursing Home watch as they are treated to several Christmas tunes and spirituals.

All photos by Kevin Walker

**Community Calendar**

**Missionary Department - Educational seminar**

ational Services of the Missionary John Christian Episcopal Church will hold Educational and on Friday, Dec. until 1 p.m. at the

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e, Sara Lee Corp., note speaker dural session. Dr. from the continu department of State University the session on va McWillis from will conduct the me writing and g. Gerald Bautative from Cam- (an organization lege-bound stupuses), will also are his expertise

to the special ses- a forum with a se group of busi- onal profession- . The guest pan- Derwick Paige, ng, city of Win- Mable Millner, ticultural affairs, ity; Dr. Monte C. iatrist, Williams Amos, guidance Reynolds High Foxworth, tax R Tobacco Co.; an, investment aymond James ces; John Daven- N.C. Department ation; Sandra resident, SMSI. Missionaries feel be an excellent youths, young eir parents. We ic to join us for day. There is no t lunch will be

grew is the presi- hn's Missionary adette Booker, the Educational tment, will serve or.

ME Church is at vford Place. The obby R. Best. For on about the sem- arch office at 336-

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umming Work- ers, Sunday Jan e Golden Flower ter, 612 Trade a, learn the basics nd explore tradi- A fee is charged. d. No experience Bill Scheidt at erve your space. umming Course tarts Wednesday 4:45 p.m. at the Tai Chi Center, treet, Winston- a, learn the basics explore tradition- discover drum- ation. A fee is drums available. necessary. Call at 774-8075 to ce.