

# Cops wait tables at Red Lobster for Special Olympics

BY PAUL COLLINS  
THE CHRONICLE

here, but we're helping the statewide effort... Besides local fund-raising efforts we do here, 10 percent of what we do as law enforcement officers stays here.

"We also have a small percentage that actually goes to new programs. Let's say a county doesn't have an equestrian program. We'll go ahead and ... pledge them some money so that they can start their program. We're very much about growing.

"It's estimated that about 1 percent of the population has mental retardation. We are nowhere reaching that segment, or that amount of people. By doing this, we try to get more people involved, bring these people to where we can get some assistance, get them integrated into Special Olympics.

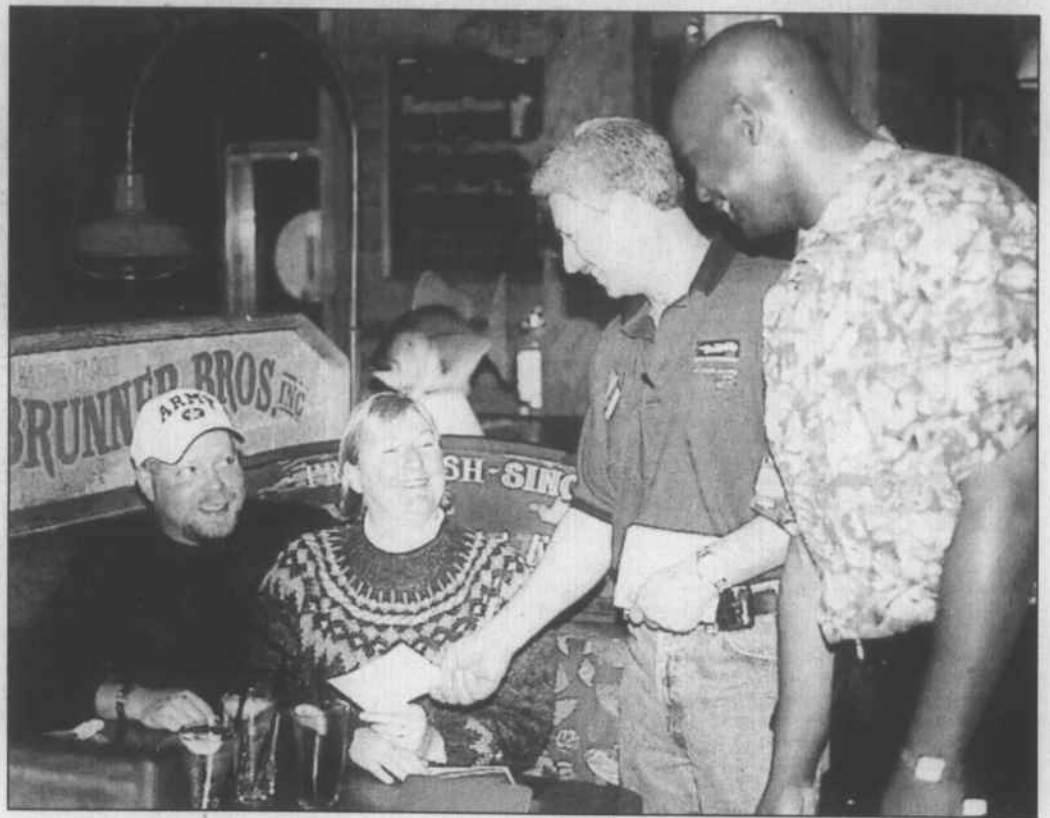
"Special Olympics isn't really even just about athletics... The slogan a couple years ago was 'Training for Life.' We try to integrate them into our society; make them useful, productive members of our society. Back in the '40s and '50s, these people were institutionalized... Special Olympics, what it's been able to do is bring them into our society as taxpayers, gainfully employed people. It's really made a big difference for them."

Pam Hockenbury, one of the managers of Red Lobster at 1690 Westbrook Plaza Drive, said Friday that officers would be at that restaurant from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. that day during the Cops & Lobsters fund-raiser. Explaining why the restaurant takes part in the project, Hockenbury said, "It helps us get involved with things going on in the community, get our name out in the community, and it's for a good cause."

The restaurant fed the officers who volunteered their time for Cops & Lobsters.

Josh Best, a Winston-Salem police officer who was participating in Cops & Lobsters, said, "It's a good cause, for Special Olympics... There are a lot of Special Olympics kids that live here."

Another officer participating, Sgt. Marty Clinard of the Forsyth County Sheriff's Department, said, "We'll (officers will) be able to greet individuals, tell them about Special Olympics and what Red Lobster does for Special Olympics and has been for the last 15 years. We'll let them know what the community does in the area of support. Wake Forest University allows us to use their campus to hold our Forsyth County Games there. Themoneys raised go to the State Games. State Games are held in Raleigh ... at North Carolina State University campus. Last year I believe the state raised



Left to right: Robert and Diane Henderson, Sgt. Marty Clinard and James Riley, a server at Red Lobster

Photos by Paul Collins

about \$1.2 million for Special Olympics. The money we raise for the state, 10 percent of that comes back to the county we work in. So whatever we raise here today, 10 percent of it will stay here in Forsyth County for our local Games."

Diane Henderson, a canine officer with the Sheriff's Department, and her husband, Robert, happened to be eating at the restaurant Friday. Diane Henderson said of Cops & Lobsters, "They spend a lot of time and effort raising money for the Special Olympics. I think it's a good thing."

Robert Henderson agreed: "It's a very good program... They do spend a lot of hours out here, raising money in the communities."

A news release says Red Lobster has been a supporter of Special Olympics for 15 years and is proud to have a hiring initiative to provide employment opportunities for people who are disabled. Special Olympics is a year-round sports training and competition program for children and adults with some form of mental retardation.



From left to right, Sgt. Steve Blemings of the Winston-Salem Police Department (shown at right holding a lobster), Officer Josh Best of the Winston-Salem Police Department (left) and Sgt. Marty Clinard (center) of the Forsyth County Sheriff's Department.

About 11:30 Friday morning, officers from the Winston-Salem Police Department and the Forsyth County Sheriff's Department were greeting customers at Red Lobster, 1690 Westbrook Plaza Drive, telling them about Special Olympics and helping serve them - to raise money for Special Olympics. Cops & Lobsters is an annual fund-raising event organized by Red Lobster with local law enforcement agencies and Special Olympics around the United States and Canada.

A news release says that the 2002 campaign marks the eighth year of the Cops & Lobsters fund-raiser. Since it began in 1995, the alliance between law enforcement and Red Lobster has raised more than \$6 million in tips for local Special Olympics programs and the Law Enforcement Torch Run.

In 2001, Cops & Lobsters raised \$1.2 million in tips for Special Olympics. The Red Lobster at 1690 Westbrook Plaza Drive contributed \$4,215 to this total.

Steve Blemings, a sergeant with the Winston-Salem Police Department, said Friday, "I coordinate all the local fund-raising efforts for the law enforcement side of what is called Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics. We're the single largest contributors to Special Olympics in the world..."

Besides Cops & Lobsters, Blemings said, "we do Polar Plunges. Guilford County just had a Polar Plunge, where they plunged in ice-cold water in a lake. (We do a) lot of golf tournaments throughout the state. One of our big (projects) is we raffle a Harley Davidson off at the fair every year; ... net profit is close to \$26,000. In the past, we've done things like billboard (sits), where we go out in the middle of the winter up on a billboard or some type of rooftop. We also assist with the Games' local needs (and the) state Games. We have a very, very active part with Special Olympics, not only the money we raise but the awareness we raise for them."

"We deposit the money (raised) directly in their (Special Olympics') accounts. There's no middle man..."

"We probably have about 700 athletes just in Forsyth County. That's a great deal. Statewide I think we have close to 26,000 or 27,000 athletes... It costs a lot of money to drive those programs. Especially a lot of the smaller counties that don't (have) programs... they're able to work and budget money from the money that we raise. So we're not only helping people

# Banking exec to speak

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Benjamin S. Ruffin, president of the Ruffin Group, and chairman of M&F Bancorp, Inc., and Lee Johnson, Jr., president of M&F Bancorp, Inc., and president and CEO of



Johnson

Mechanics and Farmers Bank, will be keynote speakers during "Mechanics and Farmers Bank Day" at Winston-Salem State University's School of Business and Economics on April 10. The event will be held at 10 a.m. in room 136 of WSSU's R. J. Reynolds Center.

President of the Ruffin Group of Winston-Salem, Ruffin also chairs the University of North Carolina Board of Governors. First elected as chair in 1998, Ruffin has been a member of the UNC Board of Governors since 1991. He retired as vice president of corporate affairs at R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. in 1999. Prior to joining R.J.R., Ruffin was vice president and special assistant to the president of North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Co. He had previously worked as a special assistant to North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt, Jr.

Ruffin's civic activities include serving on the boards of North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, J.A. Jones, Inc., the National Business League, the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, the National Urban League, and the NC Institute for Minority Economic Development. He is a Golden Heritage member of the NAACP and serves as chairman of the corporate roundtable of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators.

Ruffin holds a bachelor's degree in education from North Carolina Central University and a master's degree in social work from the University of North

Carolina at Chapel Hill. He holds honorary doctorate degrees from North Carolina Central University, North Carolina A&T State University, Edward Waters College, Elizabeth City State University, Winston-Salem State University and Fayetteville State University.

Johnson became president and COO of the Durham-based bank and president of its holding company in October 2000; he was named CEO in May 2001. Johnson began his career with M&F Bank as a teller. He worked his way through the Bank's ranks, most recently holding positions as executive vice president, chief financial officer and financial group executive. His promotion to CEO was the result of a unanimous decision by the Bank's board of directors.

He is currently a member of

Catalyst Corporate Outreach Committee of the Triangle Community Foundation, a trustee of the Home Mission Foundation, a trustee of Durham Technical Community College, a member of the board of the Durham Workforce Partnership, and a member of the board of the Durham Chamber of Commerce.

Johnson received his B.A. in business management and economics from Shaw University in Raleigh. He was a member of the charter class of Advanced Management Banking, sponsored by the N.C. Bankers Association, and the Mid-Management Banking Program, both of which were held at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Additionally, he is a graduate of the prestigious Stonier Graduate School of Banking at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

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