

Children's Day raises money for charities

BY COURTNEY GALLARD
THE CHRONICLE

The Ronald McDonald House of Winston-Salem has been a godsend for Barbara and John Souther. Their 17-year-old son Chris, who suffered multiple injuries from a car accident, is being treated a block away at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center. And the road to recovery for the Wilkes County teenager is going to be long.

"It is really nice and the volunteers who come in are unreal with their support," said Barbara Souther.

This is the Souther's second stay at the Ronald McDonald House. Years ago, Barbara gave birth to a premature son, who was also treated at the hospital but he did not survive.

"We never dreamed we'd be back here again, but it's been a blessing. We couldn't have done without it," said Barbara Souther, who also has a daughter who is a student at UNC Charlotte.

Countless families like the Souther's never dreamed they'll have to stay at the Ronald McDonald House to tend to a sick child. But all our equally grateful for the service and convenience the facility offers to families who don't live near a hospital that can adequately treat their loved one. The Ronald McDonald House means the Souther's don't have to drive back and forth every day from Wilkes County, where they live, in order to be with their son. It also means they have a place where they can enjoy all the amenities of home.

"In the 20 years since we've been open, 12,000 families have stayed with us. This is more than a place to stay. It's a place where families can come have a wonderful, comfortable bedroom; have nourishing home-cooked meals; (and have) the services of a full-time lifetime counselor, a wonderful caring staff and the support of other families," said Anita Ogburn, who is the executive director of the local Ronald McDonald House.



Photos by Kevin Walker
Above: Student performers from Moore Magnet School pose with The Grimace of McDonald's fame.

Right: Barbara and John Souther have twice been guests at the Ronald McDonald House.



na. Last year, World Children's Day raised \$12 million, and this year's goal is \$20 million. Ronald McDonald House of

Winston-Salem is one of four houses in the state and one of 240 houses around the world. Families are asked to make a \$5-\$20-a-day

donation if possible; otherwise they stay for free. The first Ronald McDonald House opened in 1974 in Philadelphia after Philadelphia Eagles football player Fred Hill's daughter was treated for leukemia.

McDonald's character Grimace and the Moore Elementary Magnet School Choir entertained guests at the launch. Local McDonald's owner and operator Rich Halverson and City Council member Vivian Burke were also on hand for the event. Ogburn says Burke has been a good friend of the Ronald McDonald House since it opened more than a decade ago.

"I felt it (was important) to have a home away from home," said Burke. "When you look at this facility it is so beautiful. ... It makes everyone feel good even when they are sad."

'Nutcracker'

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there's never been a black Sugar Plum Fairy (in 38 years)."

Miller had the chance to work with an African-American dance idol of hers last year, Lauren Anderson, who is a principal dancer with the Houston Ballet. Black dancers are few and far between in the ranks of ballet companies around the country with the exception of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater and the Dance Theater of Harlem, which

suspended operations in September due to financial problems. Miller says skin color and stereotypes about black body types frequently hold back women of color in the dance world.

"It's been difficult but once you focus on that it becomes so trivial and you think that you're just meeting quotas and that they're not taking you seriously as a dancer," Miller said. "I've always had to strive to do better than the other (white) girls."

Miller's hard work has paid off because Robert Lindgren, who choreographs the ballet, cast

Miller in the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy because of her strength and maturity. It's an honor for Miller to dance the role, he says, and it's a privilege to train someone like Miller, whom he considers to be a special dancer.

"She deserves a chance this year not just because she's a good dancer but because she is African-American. We don't get enough African-Americans to come and see our productions," said Lindgren, who was NCSA's first dean of dance. He and his wife, Sonja Tyven, who is the founder of the school's preparatory program, cre-

ated NCSA's production of "The Nutcracker" in 1966. "When a young person comes along like Bayleigh, who is talented, you want to show the public that she's not the exception but the usual."

Miller, who has a twin brother, has been dancing since she was 5. Her mother, Sylvia White, admits that she signed her up for dance lessons as a young child to avert her daughter's attention from boys. White had no idea her daughter's hobby would blossom as it has, but she's happy that Miller's dream of becoming a ballerina is coming true.

"This girl would come home at 8 years old and watch (video) tapes and (mimic) dance steps. It's something that just engulfed her and at that time I didn't know how to appreciate that...but I'm happy for her," said White, who works in the NCSA high school program.

The body's ability to move creatively through dance has long fascinated Miller. The appeal to dance for her goes beyond toe shoes and tutus.

"It's always the most beautiful thing," said Miller. "There's so much room for exploration in dance because you're given something to do and you do what you can with it and the end result is always the best part."

Even after she takes her last exam and fine-tunes her last step

Angelou will make series of appearances

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Noted poet and city resident Dr. Maya Angelou will have a busy holiday weekend.

On Friday, Angelou and pal Oprah Winfrey will co-host a concert featuring emerging

gospel star Joshua Nelson. The event will be held at 6 p.m. at St. Peter's World



Angelou

Outreach Center, 3683 Old Lexington Road. Tickets for the event can be purchased through Ticketmaster by calling 722-6400 or at Hecht's at Hanes Mall. The concert is a benefit for the Maya Angelou Research Center on Minority Health.

On Saturday, Angelou will visit Special Occasions to sign copies of her latest book, "Hallelujah! The Welcome Table." The signing will be from noon to 2 p.m.

On Monday, Angelou and Dr. Paul Wangai (a physician and medical director of New Life Homes in Nairobi, Kenya) will discuss the critical topic of AIDS in Africa during an event at 7 p.m. in the Reynolds High School Auditorium.

The event is being sponsored by the Amani Children's Foundation, which was founded here to address the problems of AIDS orphans. Proceeds from the Nov. 29 event will go toward the foundation's work. For tickets visit www.amanicchildren.org or call 831-1901. Tickets are also available at Special Occasions Bookstore at 112 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

Black Rep

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These historical highlights and so many more were honored at the 25th anniversary celebration Saturday night in the Pavilion of the Adam's Mark Hotel. More than 300 supporters of the NCBRC filled the house. Students from Hill Magnet School performed a reader's theater production of some of the poems of Dr. Maya Angelou, the first festival chairperson. Hamlin performed "The Creation," a poem by James Weldon Johnson. Levon Myers, former performer at the Cosmopolitan Club and the Dungeon Club, sang "Knock on Wood," and "Georgia on My Mind" by Ray Charles.

Mozell Duncan, cast member of "Black Nativity," sang "A Change Is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke. Cast members from "Black Nativity," which will open on Dec. 10, sang "Tell Me When Was Jesus Born," and "The Night That Christ Was Born."

The audience was made up of playwrights, directors, actors, actresses, early performers of the Black Rep, members of the NCBRC staff, NCBRC board of directors, the NCBRC Guild board, the NCBRC Guild members, the Marvastic Society, some of the festival volunteers, current cast members of "Black Nativity," and other special guests. Hamlin, founder and executive/artistic director of the Black Rep, thanked these special people for their contributions over the years.

"It has been a 'marvastic' 25 years for the North Carolina Black Repertory Company. It has surpassed all of my expectations since I founded the company in 1979," Hamlin said.

Celebrity guests included Woodie King Jr., active producer and director of black theater for more than 35 years; Elizabeth Van Dyke, actress and director; Rome Neal, artistic theater director, Nuyorican Poets Café; and Lawrence Evans, two-time Audelco Award nominee.



Rome Neal (from left), Larry Leon Hamlin, Elizabeth Van Dyke and Woodie King Jr. celebrated 25 years of great theater at Saturday's anniversary celebration.

King praised Hamlin for his vision and ability to conduct long-range planning.

"The North Carolina Black Repertory Theatre represents the thinking of its leader, Larry Leon Hamlin thinks in the long term, down the road," said King. "He brings in directors like Elizabeth Van Dyke, Ernie McClintock and Mabel Robinson. He does not always put himself in the middle to be all things to all people."

Van Dyke acted and directed a show on Zora Neale Hurston and directed "Welcome Home, Marian Anderson" at the festival. She also praised Hamlin's contributions to black theater.

"Larry Leon is a vital force in American theater, particularly black theater. He is one of the foundations of our art," she said.

Neal explained his spiritual and artistic connection to Hamlin. "Larry Leon Hamlin has presence, charisma and fortitude. This is a very progressive moment. He has been producing talent and

making black theater progressive over the years through the festival," said Neal. "He is like a kindred brother spirit of mine. We were both born on September 25. Some of the same artistic feelings he has, I have also. We both produce, direct, act, write. We do whatever it takes to put the show up. He knows all aspects of theater."

The North Carolina Black Repertory Company represents the pinnacle of success throughout the country, throughout the world. The foundation has been laid. ... He is to be congratulated and lifted up. So many people acknowledge him because of the power he brings to this city. One might think that cigarettes are power, but he (Hamlin) brings the power through theater."

W.T. Jenkins, president of the NCBRC board of directors, recognized the board, past members of the board, Theatre Guild members, Theatre Guild board members and Marvastic Society mem-

bers. He thanked all of the supporters over the years.

"At the end of this evening, you will leave full of good food with a greater knowledge of the company and a deep appreciation for its survival of 25 years," said Jenkins. "In today's world companies merge just to survive. We have been able to survive. It has been a struggle, but we have made it. You haven't seen anything yet!"

Woodie King believes that black theater will survive because of the support of African-Americans and contributions of theater companies such as the Black Rep. "As long as ... black people struggle for jobs, educational and social progress - as long as black people progress, black theater will progress. The survival of black theater progresses based on the urgency of black people," said King. "Larry Leon Hamlin is a thinker, and the National Black Theatre Festival is a testament to that fact."

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