



ESR staffers show off some of the toys that were presented to families.



A look at the enormity of the holiday project.

# Agency's partners help make holidays special for families

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Holiday Season 2007 was filled with joy and giving at the Experiment in Self-Reliance (ESR). The agency's clients were the recipients of the community's generosity during the days and weeks leading up to Christmas.

Faith-based organizations, corporations, the armed services, and individual donors and contributors came forth as they do so faithfully each year with financial and in-kind donations of toys, food, clothing and other gifts for children and their families.

"On behalf of our clients, staff and board

members, I would like to personally thank each and every person and organization that contributed to providing our ESR families and children with a brighter holiday," said Executive Director Twana Wellman. "We feel extremely blessed to have such a caring, giving community here in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.

The agency says it owes a special debt of gratitude to St. Leo's Catholic Church, which



Wellman

provides a holiday meal for many of ESR's client families each Christmas. The agency is also grateful to the U.S. Marine Corps' Toys for Tots program which donates things such as toys, games, stuffed animals, electronics, baby items and more during the holiday season each year.

"The clients we serve would often go without a special holiday family meal or toys from Santa, if it were not for the generosity of our churches, business-

es, and others," Wellman continued. "We thank all our community partners for remembering ESR and our client families during this season of the year."

ESR is also greatly appreciative to Family Services/Headstart, YWCA's Hawley House/Project Fresh Start, Step One/Insight, Fellowship Home, Exchange/SCAN, Imprints, Youth Opportunities, Triad First in Families, United Way, Sims Recreation Center, Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Living Witness Baptist Church and Open Arms Community, all of whom assisted with the distribution of toys that were left over after the distribution to ESR families.

## Ball

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famed singer who performed at the ball.

Locals believe that Winston-Salem was the only Triad city last year that conducted a Kwanzaa event on each night of the holiday. Free events were staged at churches and recreation centers. The addition of the Kwanzaa Ball to the usual, annual events is a sign that interest in Kwanzaa is growing, say TCA board members.

"The ball is a way to capture the spirit of the Kwanzaa celebration and allow individuals to really get involved and to be uplifted by African American culture," said TCA Executive Director Cheryl Harry. "A lot of times people don't see the beauty in African American culture because of so many negative stereotypes that have been handed down through the years. Kwanzaa keeps a positive light shining on our heritage and inspires us to keep moving forward."

At \$25 per person, the ball served as a fundraiser for the nonprofit, which will host the Triad Juneteenth festival this coming summer.

State Rep. Larry Womble was instrumental in getting the Juneteenth started three years ago, and has supported local Kwanzaa celebrations since they began. He looks forward to the hand TCA will play in the next Juneteenth, another African American holiday, which celebrates the day the last slaves in the nation learned about their freedom.

Womble said events like Juneteenth and Kwanzaa not only educated blacks about their history, but others about African American culture as well.

"I think it's important to have this ... so we can have an outlet to let other nationalities and ethnic groups know more about the African American experience," he said.

WSSU student Rocia Terry was among those in attendance at the ball. At 20, the psychology major represents a segment of the population that the TCA wants to see more of at its events.

Terry says it is unawareness not apathy that keeps her peers away.

"A lot of people on campus are not aware of what's going on in the community," she commented.

The ball was an enjoyable experience for Terry who attended at the urging of her mother, Vernita Terry, and she says she will likely return next year.

"I knew it was going to be beautiful; I knew it was going to be nice," she said. "(And) if it's about my culture and anything dealing with my culture, I support it all the way."

Shirley Mosley spent most



Lucy Vaughn with Cheryl Harry and Larry Womble.

of her adult life in New York City before making Winston-Salem her new home. Praising the ball, the lively senior says she was nothing short of thrilled to stumble across an event so decidedly

urban in the Twin City. "Being in the art world, this is just home to me - getting a chance to see all of this artwork and then seeing the ladies and the men with their African wear on - it just puts



Tichina Vaughn

me right back in New York," she said with a grin. "And I love it."

Mezzo soprano Vaughn has traveled internationally performing in operas and concerts throughout Europe. For the ball, Vaughn switched gears, singing R & B and jazz for the eager audience.

"I came home for the holidays and my mother and her organization were planning this extravagant event and asked if I'd participate and I said great because I haven't been able to do anything at home in a long time," she remarked. "It was an opportunity to do something intimate with family, with friends, fun, you know; who could say no?"

Local musician Keith Byrd joined Vaughn on stage, just as he had years before when the two performed at a local venue known as the Louisiana Purchase.

"Everything that comes

with Kwanzaa I guess, peace and love ... and all the different disciplines of what Kwanzaa stands for is kind of like music; kind of like the eclectic blends of styles that I play," Byrd said of his motivation to participate in the event. "It fits in my persona, you know? What I'm all about."

The event also fit in with the mission of the gallery itself, according to Marlon Hubbard who co-owns WhiteSpace with wife Chevara Orrin.

"If you are familiar with the seven principles of Kwanzaa, it's in essence how we live our lives on a daily basis in terms of how we support other businesses; how we promote unity within the community," he said. "It's just a reaffirmation and a perfect way to end the year in terms of supporting the community at large."

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