

Program for ex-prisoners benefits from Diggs' service

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

In recognition and honor of Brenda Diggs' service on the Poor and Needy Division Advisory Board of the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, the agency has approved a \$25,000 grant to Forsyth Jail and Prison Ministries Plan to Prosper Re-Entry Program.

The program provides pre-release training and counseling for inmates as well as post-release assistance for ex-offenders. Last year, the Ministries Plan to Prosper Re-Entry Program prepared 230 inmates for work preparedness, connected 251 ex-offenders to community agencies and assisted 27 persons to find housing. Diggs selected this program to receive the grant because she believes it is truly "making a difference" in this community.

Forsyth Jail and Prison Ministries has provided chaplaincy services for inmates in the jail, prison and youth detention center in Forsyth County for more than 30 years.

Diggs is a former Wachovia executive who once headed Habitat for Humanity of Forsyth County. She has been involved in charity work for most of her life. She once led a successful United Way campaign in Forsyth County.



Public service has been a hallmark in Brenda Diggs' life and business career.

Jazzy kick off to BHM at Library

BY LAYLA FARMER THE CHRONICLE

The Forsyth County Public Library system doesn't need a special occasion to honor black history, as Director Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin is quick to point out.

"We celebrate Black History Month all year through," she said with a smile. Like many other entities however, the library does put a special effort into the month of February.

This year, library officials decided to try a different approach in celebrating Black History Month, opting to focus on one important African American rather than trying to highlight the lives of the many who are worthy of such accolades.

"I think it's really unfair that we have to relegate the contributions of African Americans to one month, and no matter how many things that you try to cover, you're not going to do a good job because there are just so many aspects of contributions made by African Americans that there's too much to cover in just one month," said Children's Coordinator Joel White.

Mardi Gras at the Library served as the kickoff event for a month's worth of activities centered around the life of Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong, this year's featured African American.

The evening's activities included mask making for youngsters, performances by the Triad Youth Jazz Society; and a "parade" featuring decorated book carts from the various branches.

The event caught the attention of homemaker Nikisha Claytor, who brought her children, Solan, 5, and Isis, 3, out to enjoy the festivities.

"I like Mardi Gras; I like the whole New Orleans stuff, so why not?" she remarked. "The kids get to interact, get to make masks, they're interacting with other kids - they're home schooled, so they don't get to do this too often."

The educational opportunities the event afforded also appealed to Claytor, she said.

"They have a very diverse background and I think this adds on to their development, you know? Gets them used to different



Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin, from left, with Joel White, JaQuan Hamlin and William Stevenson.



William and Kim Boyer with their son, Cayden.



Joel White leads a group of kids in a Mardi Gras parade.

cultures," she pointed out. "I think that's important."

Kim Boyer and her husband William are planning a trip to the Big Easy with their three year-old son, Cayden, and thought the Mardi Gras celebration might serve as a nice introduction.

"We're going to New Orleans at the end of the month, so we're

trying to get Cayden ready for it," she said.

Boyer added that she wants her son to be exposed to as much diversity as possible. "I'm a teacher; I think it's a bad thing when kids think what happens in their neighborhood is what happens in the whole world," she commented. "I just think it's a big disservice to kids."

In addition to the Mardi Gras celebration, the library will host a smattering of other, Armstrong-inspired events, Sprinkle-Hamlin says.

"As a matter of fact, we have the curators of his museum from New York, they're coming down the last week in February to talk about Louis Armstrong and his art," she revealed.

Other events include Louis Armstrong movie screenings every Wednesday of the month at the Malloy Jordan East Winston Heritage Center at 6:30 p.m. each week; and a special jazz concert featuring local artist Joe Robinson and the Joe Robinson Quartet, which is slated to be held Thursday, Feb. 28 at the Southside Library beginning at 6:30 p.m.

For more information, visit www.forsythlibrary.org or call 703.2665.

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