

# SCOTT SHOWS THAT HE CARES

Local nonprofit prepares youngsters for arts careers

BY LAYLA FARMER  
THE CHRONICLE

With his shoulder length dreadlocks and colorful sneakers, Scott Abdul-Salaam hardly looks old enough to be mentoring college students. Yet the 41-year-old executive says he has a wealth of wisdom to impart to the next generation.

"God blessed me with all of this information throughout my career - there must be the obligation part on giving this back somewhere," he commented. "I thought that that was the right thing to do."

He founded the ScottCares Foundation in 2005 as a means of added support for youths hailing from low-income backgrounds who wish to pursue careers in technology or the arts.

"The mission of the foundation is to teach and promote computer literacy to the youth, enabling them to reach their God-given potential," Abdul-Salaam explained.

Now in its third year, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit has hosted a variety of events, from step shows to basketball competitions. It reaches out to children hailing from a variety of organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club and awards scholarships to youth who are interested in pursuing careers in the arts.

Professionals in related fields become members of the organization, providing financial support and the wisdom of real world experience to participating students.

The founder and president of his own company, Next Level Accessories, Abdul-Salaam has enjoyed considerable success over the course of his career, which included stints at clothing companies such as Starter, Healthtex and



Submitted Photo

**Teens involved with ScottCares Foundation projects.**

Girbaud jeans.

"When I hit in my 30's ... I had accomplished more than most people in 20 years of work," he said.

And1 Basketball relocated the New Jersey native to North Carolina in 2002. He served as vice president of the company's accessories division.

"I helped grow that company - I think when I got there, we might have been (worth) \$4 million; like in two years, we grew that company (to) about \$13-14 million," he declared.

From there, Abdul-Salaam says he decided to take a leap of faith and try his hand as an entrepreneur.

"Since I've worked in the corporate world and I knew how to do this thing, I was done - I was done making money for somebody else," he remarked.

Working in the corporate world, Abdul-Salaam says he was able to observe many prospective employees through the eyes of an executive. Oftentimes, young, African American graduates fell short, he says.

"When I sat as an executive vice president for And1, I would come in contact with African Americans ... that I

would interview, and unfortunately, some of them were not really prepared," he explained.

Abdul-Salaam resolved to change that fact by becoming an adjunct professor at WSSU.

"The opportunities are endless - endless, endless endless - and there's little things that you can prepare these students to know before they even get there," he said. "That's when I said if I could come over (to

WSSU) and at least start out in the art department, then I can help give these kids what they really, really need and what they need to know before they graduate."

Turnout for Abdul-Salaam's class was nonexistent, so he began recruiting students to intern at Next Level.

The entrepreneur says his interest in the young people grew, as he watched how much knowledge they absorbed under his guidance.

The experience inspired him, and soon he was reaching out to a far younger population, through the foundation.

"We just want to make sure that we focus on the creative field, because ... I understand manufacturing is offshore; creativity is domestic," he said. "I can teach technical, but I can't teach creativity; creativity's something that you're blessed with. We want to recognize those blessings that God has given these kids and help them reach those potentials that may lie dormant inside each of those children, because it's just important to us."

# Big names will speak in Greensboro as part of series

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Guilford College's 2008-09 Bryan Series will explore human relationships on a global scale in lectures by best-selling authors and social commentators Khaled Hosseini, Tim Russert, Sir Salman Rushdie and Anna Quindlen.

Hosseini, the author of "The Kite Runner" and "A Thousand Splendid Suns," will speak Tuesday, Oct. 14.

Russert, the managing editor and host of NBC's "Meet the Press" and author of "Big Russ and Me," will speak Tuesday, Nov. 18.

Rushdie, author of "Midnight's Children" and the controversial "The Satanic Verses," among other best-sellers, and recipient of the Man Booker Prize, will speak Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2009. Quindlen, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author of "One True Thing" and other books, will speak Tuesday, April 14, 2009.

All programs will take place at 7:30 p.m. in War Memorial Auditorium in Greensboro.

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NBC Photo

"Meet the Press" host Tim Russert will speak Nov. 18.



Abdul-Salaam

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