

Focus next month at Lewisville Library will be on screen legend Sidney Poitier

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Every fourth Thursday, they can be found at the Lewisville Library, pouring over their the pages of their books and avidly discussing the latest turn of events in the story. For more than a decade, the Friends of the Lewisville Library Book Club has met in this way, sharing the adventures of the characters in their novels, and in turn, sharing tidbits of their own varied existences.

"You get to talking about the things in the book and it reminds you of your own life," said Branch Supervisor Merrikka Brown, a member of the close-knit group of readers since its inception. "We just have a real good time."

The club sprouted from the Friends of the Lewisville Library, an assemblage of volunteers who are dedicated to raising money for the branch and donating books to its branch's existing collection.

"They cosponsor programs and they purchase a lot of things that the county can't



Sidney Poitier in "To Sir, with Love."

provide for us," Brown explained. "They provide pretty much anything that we need."

While the Friends of the Lewisville Library Book Club has seen its share of ups and downs as members passed away, moved away or pursued other interests, the core group still exists, Brown says.

"We have quite a few that have been here since the beginning," she related. "We have maybe five to 10 people (in all) that come."

The Friends are branching out next month, with a special schedule of programming to enhance the reading of their upcoming selection, Sidney Poitier's "The Measure of a

Man: A Spiritual Autobiography." The book chronicles the life and times of the accomplished actor, whose career has spanned the last five decades. The group will discuss the book Sept. 23.

"I don't know that much about him, but he is a fascinating man because he really broke the glass ceiling in cin-



ema," Brown said of Poitier, who became the first black man to win an Academy Award for his 1963 performance in "Lilies of the Field."

Poitier tackled hot button issues of the day through his movies, from interracial dating to apartheid. Some of his most well-known and perhaps, controversial roles will be highlighted in the month-long series.

The Friends plan to show "To Sir With Love," "A Patch of Blue," and "The Defiant Ones," on September 9, 16

and 23, respectively, from 12 noon until 2 p.m. The series will be open to the greater community. Whether they are a member of the book club or not, everyone has something to gain from seeing the films, says Library Liaison Erica Fields, who helped spread the word about the series.

"I think they'll learn a lot about his life and being an actor in that time," she remarked. "I think that it will spark an interesting discussion."

Brown hopes the series will raise awareness about the club and attract a more diverse audience to the library.

"It's sort of service to the community that the Friends are doing," she stated. "We just want to get the word out to just come to the library and enjoy a good series."

For more information about the Sidney Poitier series or the Friends of the Lewisville Library Book Club, call (336) 703-2940.

Festival

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"Confessions of a Video Vixen," made its debut in 2005. Steffans has appeared on television shows such as "Oprah" and "Tyra."

Other authors slated to appear include Terrie Williams, Susan Jeffers, Terry Brooks, Mary B. Morrison, Terri Woods, Troy Johnson (author, Speaker, motivator) and Michele Andrea Bowen.

Non-writers will also appear, notably Grammy-winner Stephanie Mills, who also lives in the Charlotte area. Mills became a star when she was just a teenager and star-



Tyree

ring on Broadway in "The Wiz." She went on to a successful recording career, scoring with hits such as "I Feel Good All Over," "Something in the Way" and "Never Knew Love Like This Before."

The festival will honor Mills by giving the "Stephanie Mills Scholarship" to a student during the "Kick off to Writing" ceremony.

To learn how students can qualify to win the Kickoff to Writing Scholarship, log on to www.CharlotteLiteraryFestival.com. The site also has a full schedule of events and registration information. Registration can also be done via telephone by calling 704-377-8989.

Newspaper

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of The Charlotte Post, helped start the paper - then known as the Iredell County Post - in 1980. Mason McCullough, who urged Johnson to start the newspaper, served as the paper's publisher since its founding until this week.

Farrer, who worked at The Post for 29 years, was expected to publish her first issue on Wednesday, Aug. 13.

"What's so important and exciting about this venture is that my original boss at The Charlotte Post, Bill Johnson, had a vision and saw a need in Iredell County in April of 1980," said Farrer. "I too see the need, and I have the energy and determination to make The County News a valuable servant of the underserved people of our enlarged circulation area."

"In a time when the dailies are struggling, dedicated citizens, particularly those in small communities, are looking to target market publications to bring them quality news for and about

them and to provide contact to local businesses and professionals. They are seeking insight into what's going on locally, politically and nationally, and that's just what we're going to do."

McCullough, who will remain on board at The County News and aid with the transition, said the changes at the paper are a "very good move."

"Fran has been involved in newspaper publishing for 29 years," said McCullough, who will also work with Farrer to expand the paper's advertising and circulation. "I believe she can move the paper forward in a positive way."

McCullough said he will serve as an advertising account executive and work on the circulation expansion.

The County News slogan has been "The Other Point of View," and McCullough believes the changes will aid the paper in spreading "the other" perspective.

"Going back to a weekly is really big news here," he said. "Going back to a broadsheet is really big news."

Center, 1001 South Marshall St. The next meeting is scheduled for Aug. 19, where Angela Robinson and Ryan Dodson of Liberty Tax Service will be the presenters. Also, Dr. JaNae Joyner of the Consortium for Southeastern Hypertension Control, will be present to offer blood pressure and cholesterol screenings and other services to Chamber members.

"In order to be the best managers of our business affairs and lives we must first take care of our bodies," Pender said of Joyner's visit. "So, we felt, as an organization of small business owners, it was important to offer a program to the community with health and wellness as the focus."

For more information on the Chamber, call Randon Pender at 336-575-2006, or

Carter

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have the wrong man. The vigils, they say, aren't about winning Carter public favor, but are a means to maintain Carter's and his supporters' faith during these times, which they say are both trying and uncertain.

"This has brought us closer together," Kim Carter, Keith Carter's mother, said about the prayer events. "I know that they will help bring about change."

A typical prayer gathering begins on the corner of Main and Second streets, outside of the office of Carter's public defender, Mark Rabil. After a few prayers and songs, the group, which numbered more than 25 people on Sunday, marches around the block, chanting Bible verses or singing a tune as they walk. The trek takes them around the Hall of Justice, the place where Carter may get his day in court. They end their activities outside of the Forsyth County Detention Center, where Carter is being detained. Even if Carter can't catch a glimpse of them through one of the jail's narrow windows, Gertrude Carter, his grandmother, believes the group's presence can be felt by her grandson.

It was Gertrude Carter that initiated the public prayers. She says the idea came to her through a vision from God. Since the number seven signifies "completeness" in the Bible, in all, seven prayer gatherings will be held. Sunday marked the third event. They began July 27 and will end Sept. 7.

But there is no definite or even an estimated end date for Keith Carter's journey through the criminal justice system. His family is concerned that he has been behind bars for nearly 18 months and a trial date has still not been set. It's likely that more than two years will lapse before Carter gets his day in court.

"I understand why the family is so frustrated," Rabil said during a telephone interview Monday.

The attorney is best known for his more than two decades of work to win the freedom of Darryl Hunt, who was just a few years younger than Keith Carter when Winston-Salem Police arrested him in 1984 for murder. After spending 18 years in prison, Hunt was released after DNA test made it clear that he did not commit the crime.

Rabil said the Winston-Salem Police Department is largely to blame for the delay in the Carter case. The department just recently turned over three boxes of police reports and witness interviews to Rabil and District Attorney Tom Keith, whose office will prosecute the case.

Both sides will need time to review the more than 5,000 pages of documents. After that, follow-up interviews with some of those named in the police report and further investigative work will have to be done by the defense and prosecutors in



Kim and Gertrude Carter (center) are surrounded by members of the family.

preparation for a possible trial. In a nutshell - no one should expect a resolution to this case any time soon.

"It takes so long for the Winston-Salem Police Department to get reports done," said Rabil, repeating a complaint that he has voiced for years. "It is the rule rather than the exception."

Rabil said some police reports he has received for the Carter case are dated as recent as May of 2008, more than 15 months after the incident at the nightclub. That's of great concern to Rabil, who says reports compiled more than a year later may not be as accurate and "subject to question."

The Hunt case and that of Calvin Michael Smith - who is serving time for a 1995 crime - have exposed problems with the Police Department's investigative techniques. Rabil said the department should now be striving to cross every "t" and dot every "i."

"You would think the Police Department would have learned some lessons," he said.

Capt. David Clayton insists that the department has indeed learned from past mistakes and is taking extra care to make sure investigations are above reproach. The Police Department's desire to be as thorough as possible is why it



A supporter wears a Keith Carter t-shirt.

took some time to turn over the reports in the Carter case, said Clayton, the head of the department's Criminal Investigations Unit.

"We certainly wanted to make sure we were thorough ... and all our reports were accurate when they were submitted," said Clayton.

He says that reports dated in the spring may be summary reports, which are written by the lead investigator based on information provided by other officers.

Because the nightclub had heavy attendance on the night that Plouff died, hundreds of interviews were conducted by numerous investigators, Clayton said. All of those interviews, regardless of what information the witness provided, were included in the documents the department turned over.

Clayton acknowledges the concerns that Rabil and others

have about the length of the turn-around time for police reports, but he says the department has improved. Recently, the department acquired the technology to produce so-called "e-reports," which include digitally-recorded witness statements.

Rabil's reputation among many people - the Carter family included - is that of a giant-slayer - a David who has stood against the Goliath that is the criminal justice system. He doesn't think of himself in those terms, but is proud that his experience has given him a unique insight.

"After 20 years with the Hunt case, I feel I am able to put those lessons to work for other people," he said.

Despite her son's lawyer's almost mythical status, Kim Carter is still uneasy. She has seen and heard of far too many young black men like her son who have wrestled with the criminal justice system and lost.

When asked if she has faith in the system, she thought about the question for only a few minutes.

"My faith is in God," she said.

The office of District Attorney Keith was contacted for this story. The Chronicle did not receive a response before press time.

Chamber

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originals. Huff has taught at Shaw University, A & T State University, Talladega College and Wake Forest University. His work can be seen in the movies "Lean on Me" and "Loosing Isaiah," as well as in publications like Ebony, Essence, Encore, American Legacy and Crisis.

Educational Committee Co-Chair James Davis is an Allstate Insurance sales associate and co-owner of Step-by Step Daycare Center, which he runs with his wife, Sandra. Davis is a graduate of Winston Salem State University.

The chamber meets the third Tuesday of every month 7 p.m. at the Hewitt Business



McCarter

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