

# Foundation looks to fight kidney disease

BY LAYLA FARMER  
THE CHRONICLE

Kidney disease is one of America's most deadly afflictions, claiming more than three million lives in the United States in 2006 alone, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Millions more depend upon regular dialysis treatments for their survival.

These statistics hit home for Charlie Williams last summer, when his friend and cousin, Tabitha M. Dobson, 30, succumbed to her illness after a four-year battle with kidney disease. Dobson, an elementary school bus driver from Booneville, North Carolina, left behind a 10-year-old son, Daylan.

"We grew up together," related Williams, a Collections and Audit coordinator at Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice. "We went to school together; we knew everything about each other."

Williams left Booneville in 2000 to attend college at Winston-Salem State University, but says the two kept in touch and remained close.

"(Tabitha) and her mother, they are just the most lovable people," he said.

Throughout her struggle with her illness, Dobson remained optimistic, Williams says. He was inspired by her strength and unflinching faith.

"She was on the transplant list for quite some time (but) she went through the whole process with joy," he reported. "She continued to sing in the ... choir up until a week before her passing."

In the wake of Dobson's death, Williams, a devout Christian and member of



Charlie Williams before Saturday's Christmas Parade.

Agape Faith Church in Clemmons, felt compelled to reach out to others who suffered as his cousin had. He founded the Tabitha M. Dobson Kidney Foundation in her honor this fall. The Christian-focused nonprofit, which will serve Davidson, Forsyth, Guilford, Surry and Yadkin counties, is slated for launch in January.

Fellow church member Michelle Jordan serves as COO for the organization.

"We stand on embracing, enhancing and empowering the Triad community," Jordan declared. "My thing is to creativity in giving out the Word (of God), just letting them know that you can do anything."

Jordan, an administrative assistant at Winston-Salem State University, has also watched a loved one battle kidney disease.

"I have a father who suffers from kidney disease. He has undergone a transplant and

it has gone bad," she explained. "He's very blessed to have family support, but my heart cries out for those who don't."

Plans are still in the works with regard to the scope of the organization, but Jordan and Williams have identified several areas where they hope to make an immediate impact.

Providing transportation to and from dialysis treatments for those who are in need is a cornerstone of the program.

The organization has already worked with a handful of families, Jordan says. The foundation hopes to be able to provide a more comprehensive approach to the illness down the road.

"Our vision is to have a center where (people with kidney disease) can come and get any kind of healing that they need," she revealed. "(We want people to know) God cre-

ates miracles; He is the miracle worker. He can do anything."

So far, the organization has raised more than \$400 through coupon book sales, which will go towards serving the needs of local families that are affected by kidney disease. A Gospel concert tentatively scheduled for February 2009 will also benefit the foundation.

On Saturday, the foundation took part in the Christmas Parade, hoping to get its name out as much as possible.

Generating revenue has been challenging, Williams says, but he is confident the foundation will gain steam over time. At the very least, it has already enriched the lives of its leaders.

"This has been a wonderful experience," Williams declared. "I've enjoyed meeting new people and just opening up my ministry."

For more information about the Tabitha M. Dobson Kidney Foundation, email [timd\\_kf@yahoo.com](mailto:timd_kf@yahoo.com).



Dobson

## Cobell

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The lawsuit, which is still ongoing, asks for an accounting of the trust money, fair compensation to the land owners and reform of the system. There are an estimated half a million people who inherited ownership of the trust lands. Collectively, they may be owed up to \$100 billion by some estimates.

Cobell is a member of the Blackfeet Tribe, which used to control all of Montana. Her great grandfather, Mountain Chief, was the tribe's last hereditary chief. During his rule, she said, their was an effort to make the Blackfeet dependent on the government and to make them "civilized." But Mountain Chief refused to conform to the government, even though officials pursued him relentlessly.

"I always think some of his genes sprinkled down into me and made me fight, stand up for individual Indian people," said Cobell.

Cobell grew up on a poor reservation in Montana. When the only bank there closed down, she used her business background and opened one herself. It was the first bank owned by an American Indian tribe. When she decided to look into where all the trust money was going, she ended taking on a fight so big that it scared even her.

"I hadn't sued anyone in my entire life, ever, let alone filing the largest class action lawsuit in the history of the United States," said Cobell.

When she first went to Washington, D.C., as part of the lawsuit, she called a friend and confessed her doubts. Her friend asked her "If you don't do it, who will?"

She hasn't looked back since. In 1999, a court ruled that the U.S. secretaries of Interior and Treasury had breached their trust obligations to American Indians. The court also ordered an

accounting of what happened to the trust money, which Cobell's lawyers have been trying to force the government to comply with.

"What we have in this situation is the government got away with not even paying attention to the law, breaking the law constantly, and no one was holding them accountable," said Cobell.

Several of Cobell's lawyers were also there. One is David Smith, a local lawyer with Kilpatrick Stockton and a law professor at Wake. He said the land in question is extremely lucrative, with much of it used for timber operations, mining, gas and oil wells.

"Some of this land is the most productive land in the country," said Smith. "You go to Navaho land, it's oil wells pumping night and day, 24 hours and you've got the beneficiary living in a shack next to the oil well, not receiving the money."

Dennis Gingold was one of the first lawyers on the case. He told the audience — many of whom were law students who had learned about the case in their classes — that the government had used underhanded tactics, including lies and intimidation, to obstruct the case.

"What you're learning in law school isn't what happens when you're dealing with a major case with the White House involved," said Gingold.

Bill Dorris, a managing partner at Kilpatrick Stockton and another member of Cobell's legal team, said that his client was like a rock star in the American Indian community. He said that so many in that community follow the case and hope for a favorable outcome.

"You go to Indian country and you realize their hopes and dreams are tied to her like you wouldn't believe," said Dorris.



Gingold



Dorris



Smith

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Back Row: Pavel Levy, M.D., George Plank, M.D., Matthew Edwards, M.D., Penny Crisp, A.N.P.

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