

Judge Wynn to keynote NAACP banquet

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Branch of the NAACP will hold its Annual Freedom Fund Banquet on Friday, April 29 beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the Benton Convention Center. The theme for this year is "Forward Together, Not One Step Back."

Proceeds from the event will go to provide scholarships to deserving students and to offer various programs that educate, uplift, and make the community a better place to live. Judge James Andrew Wynn Jr. will



Judge Wynn

give the keynote address. Wynn is a member of the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. President Obama nominated him to the Court on Nov. 4, 2009, along with another North Carolinian, Albert Diaz. Their nominations were jointly endorsed by U.S. Senators Kay Hagan, a Democrat, and Richard Burr, a Republican. They were confirmed by the U.S. Senate last year by unanimous consent.

Wynn, who formerly sat on both the North Carolina Court of Appeals and the North Carolina Supreme Court, holds degrees from the

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (B.A., Journalism, 1975); Marquette University Law School (J.D., 1979); and University of Virginia School of Law (L.L.M., Judicial Process, 1995).

He served in the active and reserve Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG) of the United States Navy until retiring in August 2009. After completing his active duty service in the Navy, Wynn practiced law.

For more information on sponsorships or tickets, contact the Branch office at 767-3470, President S. Wayne Patterson at 995-3072 or Freedom Fund Chairman Isaac Howard at 287-4861.

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Gangs

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nizing the signs of gang affiliation.

"Everything we do around this subject is about embracing our young people," said Gang Prevention Specialist Solomon Quick of the Winston-Salem Police Department, the visionary for the week. "Not just those who are under 18, but those who are 18-24, which is the largest group of gang members."

Merrill warned those present that some things that appear to be fashion trends, such as wearing rosary necklaces and even lacing sneakers a certain way, can be indicators that a young person is involved in a gang.

"It's hard sometimes to tell what's gang related and what's a playful sense of style," he said. "...I don't want anybody to panic. I'm just telling you the facts of the situation."

But being able to recognize the signs, and accepting the reality that their children could in fact be willingly involved, is the first step in addressing the problem, he said.

"The way to really defend these kids against gangs is not assume that they don't know what they're doing," he said. "If we let them get by with it, it's going to hurt them more in the long run."

City native Gail Henderson called the presentation "informative and depressing at the same time."

"There were a lot of discreet things that probably would've slipped past me," said Henderson, an Ardmore member who attended out of concern for her nieces and nephews.



From left: Patrick Merrill, Sabrina Gist and her father, Johnny X.

"I believe in being educated at any opportunity that comes up," she related. "My father brought us up to believe that was the one thing nobody could take away from you."

Ty Talton, the associate pastor at Ardmore for the last 24 years, said Ardmore, which was also slated to host April 7 Gang Awareness Week events, was glad to play a role in raising awareness about the problem.

"We feel like it's important for people to know that there are gangs in Winston-Salem at work," said Talton. "We sometimes think that's in other places, so we want to help people be aware of that."

The church was one of several edifices in the Ardmore area that were targeted by gang-related graffiti several years ago, Talton said.

"It was sad and it was

tragic to see that they would do that, even to a church," commented the Orlando, Fla. native.

Johnny X and his daughter, Sabrina Gist, both work closely with young people. X is an educator at Carter G. Woodson School of Challenge, and Gist and a manager at a local Cook-Out franchise. Both said they have seen some of the signs of gang affiliation highlighted exhibited by the young people they work with. X said he planned to talk to his students directly. The two say they are working to create better outcomes for ex offenders and gang affiliated youth through their community-centered program, I CARE (Individuals Caring About Rehabilitation and Education).

"We're going to build a movement," said X, a master's level student and ex offender. "...Everywhere we

go, we're teaching it right now."

Knowledge and action are some of the most powerful tools community members can wield against the gang problem on the local level and nationwide, Merrill said.

"Immorality is an epidemic in America," he declared. "If we don't teach our children, we're going to lose our children."

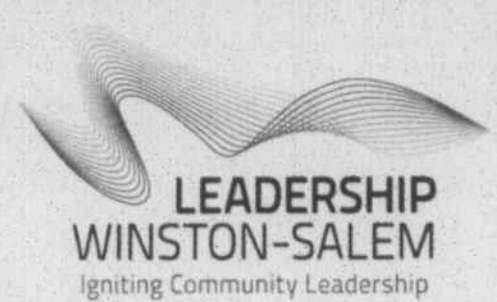
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