

A Peaceful Event



File Photo

The 20th Annual Citywide Christmas Peace Toys for War Toys Exchange program will be held at the Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum Annex on Friday, Dec. 21 beginning at 6:30 p.m. The new, larger venue is a clear sign that the program, created by Ben Piggott after his brother died as a result of violence, has become a popular holiday tradition. Kids ages 3-14 will exchange their used violent toys - things like plastic guns and violent video games - for new non-violent toys. Kids accompanied by a parent or guardian must arrive no later than 6:45 p.m., at which time the doors will be closed. The exchange is expected to conclude about 8 p.m., at which time attendees will have an opportunity to ice skate until 9:30 p.m.

Goins, Davenport picked to lead School Board

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The newest member of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education is now the board's vice-chair.

The Board elected John Davenport to the position of School Board member last week. School Board members picked Davenport more than a year ago to fill the seat of Geneva Brown, who exited due to medical conditions.

Davenport's appointment was not without controversy. Brown is a Democrat, but the overwhelmingly Republican Board selected Republican Davenport to replace her. Davenport, who received the endorsement of Brown, has maintained that it is



John Davenport

his commitment to the children of this county and not his party affiliation that should matter. Davenport, the owner of his own successful transportation engineering firm, will have to sell himself to voters for the first time next year when his term expires.

The reshuffling on the board is due to the departure of long-time Chair Donny Lambeth, who

was elected to the N.C. House of Representatives last month and will resign from the School Board on Dec. 31.

Jane Goins, who has served on the Board for nearly three decades and was vice chair under Lambeth, was elected as the new chair after Lambeth nominated her to succeed him.

The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners is expected to select someone to finish Lambeth's term, which ends next year.

In other news, the School Board decided that the new elementary school opening in south-eastern Forsyth County will be known as Smith Farm Elementary.

The school is scheduled to open in August and will be located in Zone 1 between Hall-Woodward and Sedge Garden elementary schools. The board decided that Smith Farm will have an international theme with a language immersion program.

Book

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Inter-Racial Dialogue (PIRD).

McCutchan, a native of Monmouth, Ill., launched the dialogue in 1992, inviting Stevenson, the then-pastor of Grace Presbyterian and Eversley, pastor of Dellabrook Presbyterian, to break bread with him 20 years ago. It was a racially tumultuous time both locally and nationally. The white Los Angeles Police officers who beat black motorist Rodney King were found not guilty after a heated trial. Here in the Twin City, several racially charged incidents had left this city divided, McCutchan recalls in his book, "Let's Have Lunch: Conversation, Race and Community: Celebrating 20 Years of the Presbyterian Inter-Racial Dialogue."

McCutchan called his fellow pastors to see if the trio could find a solution to save the community's racial wounds. Stevenson, a native of tiny Bolton, N.C., had been embroiled in a series of battles with the Presbyterian church, which had remained segregated until the late 1980s, prior to taking the pastorate at Grace. He admits he questioned McCutchan's sincerity at first.

"Many African Americans have what we call 'a healthy suspicion' (of whites). I was born into Jim Crow, and I grew up in it, so I am colored by all of that," said the 68 year-old, who has since retired. "... (But) Steve was insistent, and that became convincing. He did not turn away because I was not so responsive to his invitation."

McCutchan, 71, said he recognized the hypocrisy that existed within the Presbyterian church, where pastors urged congregants to "love thy brother" and yet had little or no interaction with pastors and congregations whose skin color differed from their own.

"I've always had a yearning to get to know people who were different from me," said the grandfather of two, who penned "Let's Have Lunch" earlier this year in commemoration of the Dialogue's 20th anniversary.

The three men put their heads together and formed a plan of action. They created PIRD, which brought together the clergy and members of each of the three congregations regularly for study, introspection and candid conversation. It wasn't perfect, McCutchan wrote. Some of the members disagreed or argued forcefully. Some just plain quit coming. All had other demands on their emotions and sched-

ules, making it difficult at times for them to attend. The founders admit it wasn't always easy or comfortable, but they felt strongly that honest conversation was the surest road to building trust and understanding.

Despite setbacks, the group pressed on, and soon attracted the participation of the other Presbyterian churches and leaders in the area, including Rev. Laura Spangler of Lloyd Presbyterian, Daniel Wilkers of Parkway and Stewart Ellis of Trinity. The group's work spread to the greater community, as members of the Dialogue stood side-by-side to oppose issues like the implementation of the school choice plan, which has been blamed for re-segregating the local school system.

"I think the Dialogue has committed a structure so that when things occur, they've got the structure to talk about it," McCutchan said.

He and Stevenson were deliberate in walking the walk themselves. The two men began meeting twice a month

for breakfast at Jimmy the Greek Kitchen, a tradition that has continued for more than 18 years. They bring their wives along for double dates - dinner and a show at Greensboro's Triad Stage - several times a year. Though he was wary in the beginning, Stevenson said he and McCutchan have become what he calls "good old friends."

"I am sometimes reminded of how unconscious I am of Steve's membership in the other group, and that's great progress," declared the grandfather of two. "... What we've got there is that latitude and freedom to be who you are with the understanding that we're in this to grow, we're in this to be more human, and each of us has a role to play in it. It (the relationship) is stronger and deeper than the differences."

Over the years, the Dialogue's outreach has grown to include members of the Hispanic, Muslim and Jewish communities, all of whom are well represented at the Habitat for Humanity build that the Dialogue spearheads annually. Eversley, a well-known community activist and advocate for social justice issues, said the relationships

that have formed through the Dialogue - which has spawned several interracial groups including The Voices of God's Children Choir and the Moviegoers - is its most significant contribution to the local community.

"I think the relationships are the most important thing because they generate everything else," Eversley said. "I think the Dialogue has become one of the most meaningful ministries for myself and the Dellabrook congregation to have authentic relationships - which means relationships of trust and of mutual self interest - with the predominantly white congregations. So often, those kinds of gatherings are superficial and dishonest ... but we've been able to forge some real trustful relationships."

Engaging the entire group in study of both cultures by reading books that deal with race, culture and history helped foster a greater understanding among the early members of the dialogue, Eversley said.

McCutchan, who retired from the pulpit in 2006, has produced five other books and two CDs. He said he created "Let's Have Lunch" in hopes of preserving the legacy of the group, and encouraging others to start their own movements.

"I want them to understand that if they're passionate about something and start where they are, surprising things can happen," he said of his readers. "In a way, it should be a book of hope. It is saying don't despair because things are not getting any better - you can make a difference, and you make a difference by getting together with someone else. You start talking about it, and it multiplies. Building community is one of the things we can use to tackle those things that divide us."

"Let's Have Lunch" sells for \$9.99. It is available in paperback and Kindle editions on Amazon.com. For more information, visit www.smccutchan.com.

Let's Have Lunch

Conversation, Race and Community: Celebrating 20 Years of the Presbyterian Inter-Racial Dialogue



Stephen McCutchan



City officials and Mudpies leaders break ground at the site of the new center last week.

Photos by Layla Garm

Mudpies

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Park... The work that Tony's doing here at Mudpies helps to prepare these young people for those jobs in the future, and that's why I'm so pleased to be here."

Dr. Eric Tomlinson, president of the Piedmont Triad Research Park, said he believes the new center will greatly benefit the Research Park's burgeoning workforce.

"This is a wonderful venture," declared Tomlinson, who lives nearby in the Gallery Lofts. "The Research Park is the fastest growing urban-based research park for innovation in the US. By the end of 2014, there'll be about 3000 folks working

in the Research Park ... they are folks who will desperately need child development (centers)."

Michael Suggs, executive director of the Goler CDC, said the agency plans to construct some multi-family housing units on the vacant two acre tract adjacent to the new Mudpies location. Suggs said he believes the facility will be an important driver for the growth of Goler projects and all development efforts in the vicinity.

"We think this adds a great mix as far as the things that we want to have in our community. One of the key things people are looking for is a full service community, and we think having a childcare facility makes this area even more attractive, especially to people (already) living in

the downtown area," said Suggs. "It's a welcome addition to what we're trying to do here in this community."

Burton told attendees who braved the brisk conditions to be on hand that he has big plans for Mudpies going forward.

"Those of you who know me know that I dream big," said Burton, whose name graces honorary street signs at the intersections of Seventh and Patterson, Seventh and Cherry and Seventh and Marshall Streets. "This dream is coming to fruition, so I'm moving on to the next one."

Mudpies Downtown East will generate roughly 35 new jobs. For application information or to pre-enroll your child in the facility, visit www.nwcdc.org. Commemorative bricks are also available for sale online.



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