



Sharon Johnson speaks as City Council Member James Taylor sits nearby.

## New coalition lays out ambitious plan for schools and troubled youth

BY LAYLA GARMS  
THE CHRONICLE

City Council Member James Taylor convened the first-ever meeting of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Education Coalition Tuesday at City Hall.

"I believe in order for students to be successful, it takes a community approach," said Taylor, who as a member of the City Council has little sway over school system issues but is looking to make a difference anyway. "It's about us all coming together and pulling for the best interests of our students ... My goal is to bring everyone together to provide the most successful services we can provide for our students."

A main thrust of the coalition will be to administer the Youth Build USA program, a federally-funded program that puts high school dropouts who meet certain criteria to work rebuilding their communities. The coalition has received a three-year grant in excess of \$1 million to engage 300 young people between the ages of 16-24 in the program.

John Davenport, vice chair of the Board of Education and the only school board member on hand at the meeting, has high praise for the program.

"I'd like to say we're going to put you out of business because we don't have any dropouts, but we do have dropouts," he commented. "I think this is wonderful that we have a program that addresses that."

Davenport added that he was especially pleased to see that youth with criminal records being offered a second chance through Youth Build.

"I've always thought by giving them the skill sets, they can begin to build a future ... and we can really start making a dent in the problem," he commented. "I think you're right on target."

The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, the Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce, the Forsyth County Public Library and SciWorks are among the agencies that have signed on as members of the coalition. Some member organizations have already committed to step up their efforts to partner with local schools.

"SciWorks up until now has not done a good job of fulfilling its mission within the community. Our challenge as I see it is to help students imagine their future here and I don't think SciWorks has done a good job of that," said Paul Kortenaar, who recently became the executive director of the innovative science museum.



SciWorks Executive Director Paul Kortenaar addresses the group.

"I think we need to build a stronger relationship with the community and the school system. We've been working on how to redevelop our programs to be more appropriate to the schools and to the kids."

The Arts Council has long been actively engaged with schools, according to President and CEO Milton Rhodes, who said the Council reached 43,000 local school children through its funded programs last year.

Rhodes said there is room for improvement. He hopes the coalition will allow the Arts Council to reach out to students in new and different ways.

"We think all kids and young adults have talent and it's very important for us in the adult community, the older community, to recognize that talent," Rhodes said. "...It is a symbiotic relationship that has to be developed among our children and our teachers around the community."

The Chamber of Commerce supports area youth through initiatives like "Graduate. It Pays.," a mentoring program for students who are at risk of not graduating from high school in four years' time.

"The Chamber and the business community totally understands the connections between economic development and education," commented Rodessa Mitchell, The Chamber's vice president of Education and Membership. "We have been working for a number of years to try to create a better outcome for students."

For over a decade, The Chamber has overseen a literacy based program that places community volunteers in Title One schools to work with students in kindergarten, first and second grades. It also hosts the Robot Run, a program held in con-

junction with Forsyth Technical Community College designed to get students interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).

"Everything we do is a partnership," she said. "We believe very strongly in partnership and the strength of partners."

A two-decade old City of Winston-Salem program known as Section 3 will also come under the Coalition's umbrella, Taylor said. The program provides job training and employment opportunities for low income residents, explained Sharon Johnson, project supervisor for the city's Community and Business Development department.

"The program is well known. No matter where we go all over the city, we see people whose lives have been changed by Section 3," Johnson said. "We're doing great things. We're looking forward to working with all of you and we're excited about taking Section 3 to the next level."

Easton Elementary Principal Beatriz Veto urged the coalition members not to leave younger students out of the equation.

"Don't practice that deferred maintenance," Veto implored them. "... Don't focus on remediation. Let's do it right the first time."

Taylor thanked Veto, who is new to Easton, for her passion and commitment to creating positive change for her students.

"That's exactly the energy that we needed here today," said the father of three. "These are things that we can work on and that is what I'm committed to doing."

\* The Coalition is slated to meet again in early summer. For more information or to get involved, contact Community Liaison Vanessa Smith at 336-734-1256 or [vanesas@cityofws.org](mailto:vanesas@cityofws.org).

# NBTF officials: Myers will be missed

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

News of the death of actor Lou Myers hit hard in Winston-Salem.

The show business veteran was a frequent presence at the biennial National Black Theatre Festival, endearing himself to fans with his kindness and folksy nature. He was a celebrity guest at the most recent NBTF in 2011 and told fans to expect his return at this year's event, slated for July 29-Aug. 3.

At the 2007 Festival, he was presented with a Living Legend Award for his decades of work on the stage and big and small screens.

NBTF Director Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin said Myers' passing has left a void.

"We are deeply saddened to hear of the passing of one of our living legends," she said. "Mr. Myers was very supportive of the National Black Theatre Festival. We will truly miss him."

Lawrence Evans, the NBTF's celebrity coordinator, also expressed his sorrow. He said he is taking some solace in knowing that Myers has joined NBTF founder Larry Leon Hamlin and other acting legends whose support and presence helped to define the Festival.

"He's gone on tour" is a phrase we sometimes use, particularly in the world of theatre, when actors makes their transition," Evans said. "I'm sure that Larry Leon has already assembled a Marvastic cast of heavenly luminaries who have attended the National Black Theatre Festival. Lou will continue to tell it like it is as he is welcomed by Ossie Davis, August Wilson, John Henry



Lou Myers shares a laugh with a fan at the 2009 National Black Theatre Festival.

Redwood, Esther Rolle, Carl Gordon, Roscoe Lee Brown, Virginia Capers, Sherman Hemsley, Isabel Sanford, Moses Gunn, Ray Aranha, Lex Monson, Beah Richards, Dick Anthony Williams, Jason Bernard and others."

Myers, who was 77, was born in Chesapeake, W. Va. He died near his hometown at the Charleston (W. Va.) Medical Center on Feb. 19, soon after undergoing heart-related surgery. He is best known for playing Vernon Gaines on the hit

"A Different World," which ran on NBC from 1987 to 1993. His films included "The Wedding Planner," "How Stella Got Her Groove Back," "Tin Cup," "Bulworth" and "The Fighting Temptations."

Myers was also a stage veteran, claiming an NAACP Theatre Award for his portrayal of Stool Pigeon in August Wilson's "King Heley II" and a AUDELCO Award for his role in the off-Broadway hit "Fat Tuesday."

Myers is survived by his mother and a son.

The Chronicle (USPS 067-910) was established by Ernest H. Pitt and Ndubisi Egemonye in 1974 and is published every Thursday by Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc., 617 N. Liberty Street, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101. Periodicals postage paid at Winston-Salem, N.C. Annual subscription price is \$30.72.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:  
The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636  
Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1636

She saw her dad blow insulation into the attic to make the house more energy-efficient. Then, she got an idea. Find out how energy efficiency at home means a better world for everyone at [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com).

ERICA BECAME CONCERNED BY THE LACK OF INSULATION IN HER DOLLHOUSE.

North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

WE