

Lady Rams launching mentoring program

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem State University Women's Basketball program is launching its own student-athlete mentoring program.

The Lady Rams Big Sister program is set to begin during the 2014-15 basketball season. Players will serve as mentors to girls in elementary and middle schools in Forsyth County.

The program's goal is to provide friendship, support and guidance to the girls, who will spend two-to-three hours per week with the student-athlete. Pairs will busy themselves with academic, athletic and social activities. The Lady Rams aim to build young girls self-confi-



WSSU Photo by Garrett Garris

dence and self-esteem, while helping them plan for the future in higher education.

To be considered for the program, participants must be currently enrolled in a Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School; be in good academic standing; and submit a one page essay via email, to ruddts@wssu.edu, about what having a mentor would mean to them. The deadline for submission is Aug. 1.

Parents interested in having their child participate in the program can contact the women's basketball office by emailing coleal@wssu.edu or ruddts@wssu.edu for more information.

Workers

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important," Cox said. "When we are talking about healthcare, we're talking about life and death. If you are being paid poverty wages and you barely have enough to get by, that is inhumane," he said.

But Cox was the only Novant employee on hand speaking out, at least no others publicly indicated that they worked for the company when a speaker asked them to identify themselves.

Cox and others are calling for a minimum wage of at least \$15 - nearly \$5 more than even Democrats in Congress are considering. He enlisted local heavy-hitters for the cause. Speakers included noted local activists Rev. Carlton A.G. Eversley, Larry Little and Linda Sutton.



Photos by Chanel Davis

Marchers take to the streets.

"We have to organize. Corporate profits are out of the roof and the workers wages have just flat-lined," said Little, a Winston-Salem State professor well known for leading the

local Black Panther Party in the 1970s and working to exonerate Darryl Hunt for murder in the '80s and '90s. "The union movement in this country is what built the middle class."

The group marched from the church to the site of the former Reynolds Tobacco factory near Fifth Street, where in the 1940s a group of mostly black workers went on strike to demand better pay and working conditions. A historic marker was erected at the site in 2013, denoting the significance of Local 22. Cox, who has perviously been involved in the Occupy Winston-Salem movement, helped to facilitate the honor.

Denise Mihal, president and CEO of Forsyth Medical Center (a Novant hospital in Winston-Salem), said in a statement Tuesday that as one of the area's top employers, Novant places great value on its workers.



Payton

employees and their commitment to provide remarkable care and to improve the health of the communities we serve," the statement reads.

"We are proud to offer our employees comprehensive and competitive benefits, including medical, dental, vision, disability, life insurance, flexible spending accounts and a retirement plan."

Mihal said many workers who provide services like housekeeping and food and nutrition are contracted through other companies and are not employed by Novant Health.

"Novant Health requires all contractors to strictly follow wage and hour laws. It is our expectation that contractors offer market competitive salaries and benefit packages."

"We greatly value our

Irie

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play in the restaurant, which specializes in Southern and Jamaican foods and a combination of them both.

"This is a true fusion restaurant," said Warren. "This is different from any Jamaican restaurant in the Triad ... because we don't only do just Jamaican food, we do them both and Georjean fuses them very well."

Jamaican standards like jerk chicken, curry shrimp and ox tails are on the menu, as are Southern classics like collard greens and baked macaroni and cheese. The cultures collide on menu options like the popular Tropical Coleslaw, which is infused with mandarin oranges, pineapple and coconut.

Plantain and sweet potato chips are available, as are a variety of Jamaican sodas. Some of the desserts, including the banana pudding cake, pineapple coconut cake and sweet potato cheesecake, are made fresh by Clemmons-based Lei Lei's Cuisine. Others, like the ever-popular mango cheesecake, are made in-house.

Georjean, a native of Queens, N.Y., is Irie's culinary force. A first generation American, her family hails from Kingston, the capital of Jamaica. She calls her grandmother and uncle, "The best cooks I know." Talent in the kitchen must be in the genes. Georjean's recipes even dazzled her culinary school instructors at Johnson and Wells University in Charlotte, where she graduated with a perfect GPA.

"I'm very proud of my roots and my culture and decided to fuse everything we love from the culture (and) my husband's culture; he's from Winston and I'm the Kingston," she said.

Colorful, clean and high tech, the restaurant looks less like a small eatery and more like the franchise that the couple is hoping it becomes. The front counter has a sleek, computerized Clover registers, menus displayed on digital monitors and an assortment of popular foods ready to be served. There's also a 51-inch flat screen TV and free wifi for customers to enjoy.

"We didn't want a mom

and pop feel; we wanted to focus on good food, good customer service and a good dining experience," said Warren.

The couple brings a lot of experience to their newest venture. Georjean is a noted local dancer with a degree in fine art and dance from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She has performed ballet in Europe and West African dance throughout the country as part of the Otesha Creative Arts Ensemble, for which she served as artistic director. She has also played Mary in the N.C. Repertory Company's hit holiday musical "Black Nativity."

She met her husband while teaching dance at Carver High School, where he was the band director. Having children limited her ability to travel as a dancer, so she pursued her other passion: cooking.

After culinary school, she was a sous chef at Wake Forest University and started her own catering business with her husband, GEM (her initials) in the Kitchen. The couple also ran the Blue Note Cafe in the Hiram H. Ward Federal Building. They changed the theme of the cafe's menu each day to include Jamaican, Asian and Italian foods.

Warren, who earned a master's degree in music from UNCG after completing his undergraduate studies at Winston-Salem State University, mostly handles the business end of the couple's culinary ventures.

It's a challenge that is compounded by his coloboma of the retina, an eye defect that has left him practically blind since birth. He zooms text to read from on a computer screen and uses a magnifier for printed material. To help equip himself for culinary management, he took classes through the NC Division of Services for the Blind's Business Enterprise Program, which teaches visually impaired people how to work in the food service industry.

"You learn to work with what you have (and) ask for assistance when you need it. It's never been really a handicap for me," he said. "I credit my parents for that because when I was younger, they told me never use it as a crutch and that I could do anything I wanted to do."

The Moores have four



Photo by Todd Luck

Staffers Brianna, Georjean and Warren Moore, Gina Blair, Kenneth Glenn, Nathifa Campbell, Yamani Brewer, Shamia Scales and Kathy Tanner.

children; the oldest, Brianna, works at the restaurant and will be following in her mother's footsteps this fall by attending Johnson And Wales.

After completing the school's culinary arts program, Brianna is hoping to start her own culinary venture.

Brianna is one of more

than a dozen Irie Rhythms employees. They include cooks who are being trained by Georjean. The team wears smart green uniforms with black caps.

Though it only opened two weeks ago, business has been "amazing," say the Moores, who are crediting positive word of mouth for the steady stream of customers. Food delivery will be added soon. Expansion to multiple locations is also on the couple's radar.

"I married the right person and she married the right person because we're both not only ambitious, but we're driven," said Warren.

Irie Rhythms (www.irierhythms.com) is open 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday-Saturday in Silas Creek Crossing, which is the shopping center across from Hanes Mall. The restaurant will be hold a grand opening on Aug. 6 at 10:30 a.m.

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