

COMMUNITY

SECTION B

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AUGUST 21, 2014

It's Her Birthday!

Mama Marv-tastic, Annie Hamlin Johnson, turns 85 in style

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Fashionably late, indeed!

Partygoers had partaken in meeting and greeting and the exchanging of pleasantries when the star of the evening made an audacious entrance.

Flanked by three of her strapping grandsons, outfitted in a modish gown in her signature purple and bauble-laced from her head to her fingertips, Annie Hamlin Johnson was the belle of this ball, and she knew it.

Known for living life to its fullest, Hamlin Johnson celebrated her 85th birthday Saturday with several dozen family members and friends at the Marriott Twin City Quarter. To many, she is known as "Mama Marv-tastic," a name bestowed upon her by her late son, Larry Leon Hamlin, founder of the National Black Theatre Festival and N.C. Black Repertory Co. Though her son's accomplishments are lauded the world over, Hamlin Johnson has become a star in her own right - largely because of her big heart.

"She never met a stranger," said her granddaughter Reba Moore, who emceed the soiree. "Grandma talks to everybody."

She has taken many under her ample wings over the years. When she asked her "children" to stand up, a third of the party guests rose to their feet, while her blood daughters, Sherrie and Linda, grinned and kept their seats.



Photos by Kevin Walker
Dr. Sir Walter Mack praises Hamlin Johnson as her daughter, Sherrie sits nearby.

Right: The grandsons, Larente Hamlin (left), Derrick Hamlin and Johnnie Cheeks Jr. (back), escort their grandma.

Evangelist Jackie Faucett Josie considers Hamlin Johnson her "second mother." It has been that way since she was a child in Hamlin Johnson's native Reidsville.

"I have known her since I was born and have loved her since then," said Faucett Josie, who honored the birthday girl with a stirring gospel tribute.

A musical salute also came from Gordon Slade, Hamlin Johnson's nephew. The two are close enough in age that Slade was often sent with her to teenage

dances at the local armory to keep watch, but Hamlin Johnson was having none of that.

"I used to not see her again until the time we

were leaving," he recalled for partygoers before delivering a spiritually-remixed version of "Best Thing that Ever Happened to Me."

Though she is rarely seen without her trademark wide smile, Hamlin Johnson has endured many storms. Both her

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Community Calendar

Black Chamber meeting
The Winston Salem Black Chamber of Commerce will have its monthly meeting this evening (Thursday, Aug. 21) from 7 - 8:45 p.m. at the Forsyth Technical Community College/Mazie Woodruff Campus, 4905 Lansing Drive. A panel discussion featuring Carol Davis of S.G. Atkins CDC, Donna Taylor of the Liberty CDC, Michael Suggs of Goler CDC and Larry Weston of the Ujima CDC will be held. Members and non-members are welcome. Refreshments will be served at 6:30 p.m. For additional information, contact Randon Pender at 336-575-2006.

Auditions
The NC Black Repertory Company's Teen Theatre Ensemble is seeking teens ages 13-18 of all ethnicities for a six-week training session in acting, singing, dancing and backstage tech. The session will start Aug. 23 from noon-5 p.m. Call 336-723-2266 to schedule an audition, or go to www.NCBlackRep.org for more information.

Cookout/yard sale
The Oak Summit Community will have its annual Cookout and Yard Sale on Saturday, Aug. 23. The yard sale will be held on the vacant lot at the corner of Whittier and Oak Summit roads from 7 a.m. - 1 p.m. The cookout will be held at the Oak Summit Park on Oak Summit Road from noon-4 p.m. For additional information, contact Randon Pender at 336-575-2006.

Business seminars
The Forsyth Technical Community College Small Business Center is hosting several upcoming seminars. "Time Is Money" will be held at the Innovation Quarter - 525@Vine from 6-9 p.m. on Monday, Sunday, Aug. 25. "Beyond The Basics of Selling Items on eBay" will be held at the Forsyth Tech Northwest Forsyth Center from Wednesday, Aug. 27 from 6-9 p.m. "Small Business Roundtable - Business Pitches" will be held at The Enterprise Center at WSSU on Thursday, Aug. 28 from noon - 1:30 p.m.; "Starting a Non Profit 102" will be held Innovation Quarter - 525@Vine on Thursday, Aug. 28 from 6 - 9 p.m. To register and/or obtain additional information, visit <http://www.forsythtech.edu/services-businesses/small-business-center>.

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Jackie Faucett Josie performs.



Dr. and First Lady Mack listen as Gordon Slade sings.



The birthday girl speaks.

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