

A LOOK BACK: NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL

# NBTF not just for plays



Bern Nadette Stanis, best known as Thelma on "Good Times," was among the authors at the International Vendors Market.



Bryant Taylor sells Black Greek clothing at his BTS Urban Wear booth.

## Market draws vendors and shoppers

BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE

When not taking in the multitude of plays, many attendees of the National Black Theatre Festival could be found at the M.C. Benton Convention Center perusing the wares at the NBTF International Vendors Market.

A tradition at the NBTF, the vendors market brings in more than 20,000 customers each festival. Organizer Rhonda Caldwell, president of The Main Event, said both locals and the many out-of-town visitors the festival attracts are drawn to the market.

"They're wanting to come and find unique things," she said.

This year, Ford Motor Co. was offering test drives in front of the convention center and letting attendees spin a wheel for cash and prizes. In the hallway, volunteers selling T-shirts and other paraphernalia bearing the NBTF logo were doing a brusque business. Along the hall, many authors sold their books at tables.

Among the writers was Bern Nadette Stanis, best known for her role as Thelma in the 1970s sitcom "Good Times." She had copies of her book "Situations 101: Relationships" advice book. She got a steady stream of people paying for her book and a photo with the actress.

"People just support me and love me," she said. "They always tell me they still watch 'Good Times' and it's generational now because now they're letting their children and grandchildren watch it. They always tell me it's the best TV ever."

Stanis' new book that comes out this month, "The Last Night: A Caregivers' Journey Through Transition and Beyond" talks about her life, including becoming a star on "Good Times," her parents role in her success and dealing with her mother's Alzheimer's disease. Stanis took care of her mother, who passed away in 2007, for eight years with the disease and now has a Remembering the Good Times Alzheimer's Foundation, which she was raising money for.

Inside the vendors' room, more than 100 vendors were selling their wares. Some vendors, such as Gloria Vaughters, were local. She was selling handmade jewelry in her Gloria's Place booth. Vaughters was a quality inspector for 25 years at Tyco electronics before a kidney transplant left her unable to work. She was looking for something to do with her time when she took a jewelry making class at the arts and crafts store A.C. Moore.

"I enjoyed it when I started taking classes," she said. "I was bored sitting at home. I had to find something to do."

Vaughters fell in love with making jewelry and now displays at festivals and events regularly and does the NBTF vendors market when it comes to Winston-Salem every two years. She said customers are drawn to the uniqueness of her jewelry, which she designs herself.

Most vendors were from out of town, like Bryant Taylor from Duncan, S.C. who was surrounded by Black Greek clothing at his BTS Urban Wear booth. It's his second time at the vendors market.

"I like the vibe, the spirit, the feel of it, everything," he said.

There were a wide variety of products and services

offered at the market. A stage area allowed for vendors to do demonstrations, such as Thursday's make up demonstration done on attendees by Bovanti Cosmetics and Spa of Greensboro. Debra Hubbard of Los Angeles, California, was selling T-shirts she made herself bearing the words "Black Don't Crack," an old adage that she trademarked herself. Optician June Mines of Washington, D.C., was busy at her These Eyes of Mines booth, taking orders for stylish prescription glasses that she would mail to customers.

Carl Crawford of Columbia, S.C., turned his space into a small gallery for his colorful framed fine art. Crawford is a former graphic artist who used to do print production. Now he's a professional artist who uses cut up old magazines to create collages so seamless that they resemble paintings upon first glance. He's drawn to movement in his art, portraying dancers, children and jazz. He regularly sets up at various festivals, including the NBTF vendors market.

"Anytime you deal with people who respect the creative energy of the arts, that's a market I need to be in," he said.

Marsha Holden was among the many customers at the vendors market. She came with The Colorful Arts Society of Atlanta, Georgia, to see some plays and take in the theatre festival experience. She bought a birthday present for a relative and Shea butter on Thursday afternoon before having to leave to catch a play, but said she'd definitely be back to buy more.

"It's beautiful, it's beautiful stuff," she said. "There's a lot of things. If I was a millionaire, I'd buy more."

## Youth Celebrity Project 2015 thrives at National Black Theatre Festival

BY FELECIA PIGGOTT-LONG,  
PH. D.  
FOR THE CHRONICLE

Nana Malaya Rucker invited the youth to join her at the front of the stage to do the Fanga dance from Nigeria at the Gardenia Terrace of the Embassy Suites hotel on North Cherry Street.

"Let's lift our hands to the sky. Now bring them down to the earth. Extend

theatre professionals and their peers in the arts. From Aug. 4 through 7, the youth met to network and share talent with one another. Solomon continues to promote young people's talent.

"Over the years, I have seen it [the Youth Celebrity Project] transform into an event with its own followers and its own energy," said Solomon. "Prior to the festival, I received numer-

ous calls from individuals who live in other cities and states inquiring about the Youth Celebrity Project. Many families are now bringing their children and grandchildren to be a part of this wonderful event."

New components have been added since its inception, such as Teen Talk and Man Talk. The Youth Celebrity Parade took place on Tuesday morning (Aug. 4), and the Carver High School Band usually participates. Colby Christina served as the Teen Chair and the Grand Marshal for the Parade.

There were 25 entries in the parade, including city officials, celebrities, the Winston-Salem Police Chief, city councilmen, and more. Thursday's Session (Aug. 6) featured the popular group from "America's Got Talent," Inspire the Fire.

Local talent included Khalil Caesar of the Teen Theatre of the North Carolina Black Repertory

Company. He led the youth in the singing of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the Negro National Anthem. The program also started with the Black Reps Cheers and the step team of the Kemet Academy Summer Youth Program from

Emmanuel Baptist Church. The Mt. Zion Child Development Center and Praise Dancers, under the direction of Kristy Franklin, performed the song "I Can't Breathe Without You." Nelson and Tamela

Roberts, Monarch Music Academy, Play Play Productions, Bristol Whitt, a spoken-word artist and many more presented their talents.

Guest Appearances from celebrities such as Busta Brown and other

playwrights, performers and choreographers made this part of the Festival very special. Youth had the opportunity to observe and ask questions of professionals who may be doing what the youth plan to do in the future.



Kemet Academy Summer Youth step team performs as part of Youth Celebrity Project for the National Black Theatre Festival.

them to the right and to the left. Let's welcome everybody!"

Rucker is an actress, dancer, songstress, storyteller, poet, writer, director/choreographer, and she is known as the "Dancing Diplomat." She is also known as the mother of Lamman Rucker, the sheriff on Tyler Perry's "Why Did I Get Married?" She and Dennis Reed served as the morning hosts of the Youth Celebrity Project this year. Reed is a poet, CEO, an artist, songwriter for Inspire the Fire, and philanthropist.

The Youth Celebrity Project of the National Black Theatre Festival has been a component since 1993. Co-founded by Cleopatra Solomon and Cynthia Mack, both formerly of the Winston-Salem Urban League, the Youth Celebrity Project continues to grow. More than 6,000 youth of all ages from across the country interact with celebrities,

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**FREE!**

# MOVIE NIGHT

**AND FAMILY FUN**

## Join us for our Outdoor Family Film Series!

When: Gates Open @ 7:30 pm, Show Time @ 8:45 pm  
Fridays (July 31st-August 28th, 2015)

Where: J.F. Kennedy High School, Parking Lots # 2, #3 & #4  
(12th Street Entrance)

DATE	MOVIE	Rated
Friday, July 31st	Frozen (Disney)	PG
Friday, August 7th	Annie (2014)	PG
Friday, August 14th	Spongebob: Sponge Out of Water	PG
Friday, August 21st	Shrek (DreamWorks)	PG
Friday, August 28th	Home (Dream Works)	PG

• Children ages 14 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

• Lawn chairs, blankets and personal coolers/snacks are welcome (no tents please).

• This is a tobacco-free and alcohol-free event.

• Free admission & open to the public!

Sponsored by:

Cleveland Avenue Transformation Team (CATT), Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools and the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem.