



Photo by Tevin Stinson

Rev. Dr. John Mendez speaks during the memorial service for Darryl Hunt at Emmanuel Baptist Church on Saturday, March 19.

# Hundreds attend memorial service for Darryl Hunt

BY TEVIN STINSON  
THE CHRONICLE

There were few empty seats left last Saturday afternoon at Emmanuel Baptist Church as more than 500 people gathered at the church located on Shalimar Drive to celebrate the life of Darryl Hunt, a man who was released from prison in 2004 after serving 19 years for a murder he did not commit.

In 1984, Hunt was wrongfully convicted of the rape and murder of Deborah Sykes, a white copy editor at the Sentinel, a newspaper in the city.

After being released, Hunt dedicated his life to educating the public about the flaws in the criminal justice system and providing resources and support for those to rebuild their lives.

During the service, pastor of Dellabrook Presbyterian Church Rev. Dr. Carlton Eversley said although Hunt converted to Islam while in prison, "he never gave up on Jesus and Jesus never gave up

on him."  
"He was determined to fight for justice, freedom and education," said Eversley. "Darryl taught us how to deal with racist injustice without hatred, bitterness and anger."

Eversley mentioned the best memorial we can make to Hunt is to pursue the things that he thought was important: to oppose the death penalty, support people coming out of incarceration, and to fight against false allegations.

Although Hunt's death has not been officially declared a suicide, Winston-Salem police said that a gun was found near his body and he appears to have killed himself with a gunshot to his mid-section. A police report noted that a gun was found near Hunt's body and that the vehicle was locked.

Attorney and Winston-Salem State University professor Dr. Larry Little, one of Hunt's closest friends and supporters, told those in attendance that he had found a goodbye note. Hunt felt bad about the

split from his wife and had been recently diagnosed with stomach and prostate cancer and was told he only had a few months to live.

"It was clear he was frustrated and in a lot of pain," said Little. He wanted us to know that he loved this community."

Little mentioned Hunt asked the community to support his ex-wife and not to forget about Calvin Michael Smith, who is currently serving a 29-year sentence for a crime many believe he did not commit.

Other speakers during the service included, N.C. NAACP president Rev. William J. Barber, and Rev. Dr. John Mendez who was also one of Hunt's closest friends.

Barber said that after he got the news of Hunt's death, he sat for a moment very still and tried to find the words to describe the life of someone who had become a friend, brother comrade, and a hero to people across the nation.

"Those who are resurrected from injustice die again and again from the pain born

of hurt endured that never should have been," continued Barber. "When our heroes fall we can't die, not now. We who are still alive must try one more time to honor them, to honor justice, to honor Darryl."

Pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church and community activist Rev. Dr. Mendez said we must not blame Darryl for his death because the system of oppression is what truly is responsible.

Following the service, a number of residents said they decided to attend the memorial service because they were moved by the work Hunt did following his release from prison.

"After all he went through so much, he never showed any anger or ill will towards anyone," said Tiffany Robinson from Winston-Salem.

"He helped so many people turn their lives and touched many more. He will truly be missed."



Photo by Tevin Stinson

Early Head Start teacher Nahesha McCatty helps a student wash her hands inside one of four newly renovated classrooms at the Sarah Y. Austin facility located on Big House Gaines Boulevard.

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# Early Head Start classrooms open in Forsyth County

Family Services awarded \$2.2 million to bring program to area

BY TEVIN STINSON  
THE CHRONICLE

Family Services has officially opened all the funded classrooms for its Early Head Start Program in Forsyth County, the first such program in the county.

The organization opened four EHS classrooms at the Sarah Y. Austin campus, the primary site for the Head Start program that the agency has funded in Forsyth County for 50 years. President and CEO of Family Services Bob Feikema said that without a program like Early Head Start, high quality education is hard to come by for low-income families.

"We are thrilled to have the sites open and serving our community's youngest children," said Feikema. "The educational investment into Early Head Start boosts the development of the young brain."

Family Services opened the classrooms earlier this month.

Late last year, Family Services was awarded \$2.2 million in federal funding to bring the first Early Head Start (EHS) program to Forsyth County. Early Head Start serves families with children ages birth

through 3 and low-income pregnant women.

Created by the 1994 Head Start Reauthorization Act, the federally funded preschool program is designed to meet emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs. Currently there are 117 children participating in the program at different sites throughout the county.

According to Feikema, the four EHS classrooms at the Sarah Y. Austin campus, 2050 Big House Gaines Blvd., needed extensive renovations in order to meet state and local regulatory compliances. As a result of the remodel, the once-empty rooms have been transformed into state-of-the-art classrooms fit for the care and education of infants and toddlers.

EHS teacher Nahesha McCatty said on Wednesday, March 2, that she is proud to be teaching in the program. A former student in the Head Start program, McCatty mentioned that it is vital to the developmental process.

"Early education is very important," she continued. "I know sometimes it gets overlooked, but the first years are the most critical years."

McCatty noted that what she likes most about the program is that she gets to build relationships with the families. She said with home visits and other things included in the program the students feel more

comfortable.

"When we visit their homes, we get a chance to see the children in their own environment," said McCatty. "So when they come to the classrooms, they aren't as scared because they have seen us in their own homes, which makes the transition a lot easier."

A family advocate is also provided for each family, and parents are given the opportunity to engage in classroom activities and participate on the decision making body for the program by serving on parent committees.

During a recent visit to the Sarah Y. Austin campus, a number of parents said they were excited that their children have the opportunity to participate in the program. Erika Tillman said she believes the program will build the groundwork and offer skills that will stay with her daughter for a lifetime.

"As a mother, I am very excited and feel that my child will gain from this program, socially, emotionally, and will strengthen her language and learning skills."

The Forsyth County EHS programs' waiting list currently has 538 children on it. Feikema told *The Chronicle* that he is expecting more funds to become available to create more Early Head Start and Head Start programs.



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