

Nonprofit delivers clothing, toys for the holidays



Brittany Ward is HOOPS4L.Y.F.E founder and executive director.

Some of the toys collected in the toy drive by HOOPS4L.Y.F.E. for the children are shown.

Photos by Timothy Ramsey

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

With Christmas coming this Sunday, there are many families that need assistance in filling the gap underneath the Christmas tree. The HOOPS4L.Y.F.E nonprofit organization, led by Founder And Executive Director Brittany Ward sought to assist families during the holiday season by providing toys and winter coats for the kids.

Officially founded in March of 2014 the HOOPS4L.Y.F.E organization's mission is to empower and redirect at-risk youth in community-based afterschool programs in an effort to engage youth in academics, increase their exposure to a variety of activities and provide students with a safe space.

Ward says the idea for the giveaway started about four years ago with a friend of hers who has his own nonprofit

group. Each year they compile a list of children who are in need and find out which toys and clothes sizes the children need.

Materials for the giveaway are donated from the community, Winston-Salem State University, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Police department, local churches and close friends of Ward. She says the children are chosen on the basis of those who have the biggest need.

"Growing up I experienced difficult times during the Christmas holiday because it was either-get gifts for us or pay bills and my mother is a very logical thinker," says Ward. "I thought it was very important to not only help these kids in giving them gifts but also to inform them that family is the most important thing around this time of the year."

Ward says she started with the collection of the toys, shoes and clothes a few weeks ago and has drop offs at a

few locations around the city.

She says she would love to expand the giveaway, but would also love to connect with other nonprofit organizations such as the Salvation Army, the Josh Howard Foundation and the Chris Paul Foundation. She thinks the cooperation with multiple nonprofits will enable them to reach more children who are in need.

"We want to have the kids to have a sense that somebody cares besides their parents," Ward continued. "We have to make it a community again because I don't feel as though we are one."

The toys and other gifts will be dropped off to the children on Christmas Eve.

Anyone who wishes to donate or inquire about more information visit HOOPS4L.Y.F.E on all social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat at HOOPS4L.Y.F.E.

City beginning new program for immigrants and refugees

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Winston-Salem will be providing services to help immigrants and refugees through its Building Integrated Communities (BIC) partnership.

BIC is an initiative of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to strengthen immigrant communities around the state. UNC partnered with the city's Human Relations Department to do a needs assessment of local immigrants that included surveys and public comment meetings. Various needs were identified, like transportation, education and health care access.

City Human Relations Director Wanda Allen-Abraha said the BIC program will offer a 30-day "pipeline" for refugees and immigrants entering the community, giving them a series of "crash courses" on vital local resources that will last about an hour apiece.

For instance, there will be courses pre-



Wanda Allen-Abraha

pared by various local agencies on resources available in public transportation, education and housing with translated materials for participants. Partners in the initiative cover a wide variety of services, including Novant Health, Legal Aid and Second Harvest Food Bank.

There will also be a resource guide available online and in printed form at the various partner agencies.

"It's been something that we all agree is needed and we think will really result in being very helpful to those immigrants and newcomers when they come from

their various countries of origin," said Allen-Abraha.

She said that the program is currently being developed and will begin in the spring or summer. Also part of the BIC proposal approved by the City Council is the hiring of an Integrated Communities Liaison to assist in the city's outreach to foreign populations in Winston-Salem. There're also plans to add an option to translate the city website into Spanish, which will be placed prominently on the site.

Foreign-born newcomers will be able to refer themselves to BIC or other agencies may refer them. One of those agencies is World Relief, a global organization that the State Department contracts with to resettle refugees. Jennifer Foy, director of the group's High Point/Winston-Salem office, said in the past eight years, about 600 refugees have been resettled in Winston-Salem. Most of the refugees are from Myanmar and others are from places like the Congo and Syria.

She said refugees often fear the police and government due to corruption in their own countries. She said BIC, which includes police and other government agencies, will help orient them and put them at ease in their new community.

"It's a great way for newcomers in the Winston-Salem communities to become more comfortable with the communities they're living in," said Foy.

Foy said refugees go through an extensive vetting process by the United States government. The minimum time it takes a refugee to go through the process is 18 months with most taking 7-9 years on average. Governments on all levels are aware of refugees that are resettled locally. She said she has quarterly meetings with local government officials about them. They're also entered into a state-maintained database and registered with the departments of social services and social security.



Photos by Tevin Stinson

(Above) Local artist Aaron Gibbons explains how he came up with the idea for "Interactive Bird," the city's newest sculpture, in Winston Square Park.

On Tuesday, Dec. 20, Mayor Allen Joines unveiled a new sculpture in Winston Square Park known simply as "Interactive Bird." The 8-foot bird was designed by local artist Aaron Gibbons.

Architects group and Arts Council unveil award-winner's work

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

What stands 8 feet tall, 13 feet long and has wings and a beak? If you guessed a giant bird, then you are correct, but you probably didn't guess that this one-of-a-kind bird is in the heart of the downtown area.

Earlier this week, Mayor Allen Joines officially unveiled the city's newest piece of art, known simply as "Interactive Bird."

The giant bird made of welded steel tubing, was created by local artist Aaron Gibbons and was the winner of the UNRULY design competition.

The competition, spearheaded by the local section of the American Institute of Architects (AIAWS), in partnership with The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County,

encouraged architects, artists and designers to explore the relationship with the built environment through constructed architectural elements in Winston Square Park. Although they received dozens of submissions, a representative from AIAWS said what made Gibbons' piece stand out was that it was interactive. The viewer can sit inside the sculpture and move the bird's beak and wings.

While discussing his latest work, Gibbons a native of King, said the structure started out as a

simple geometric drawing. He said once the drawing began to resemble a bird, he started trying to make it interactive.

"Once I realized it was going to be a bird, it made sense to tie in elements to make it interactive," said Gibbons. "I wanted to get back to that raw state and the creativity of a child. I feel that it's important that we get back to that."

After the unveiling on Tuesday, Dec. 20, Mayor Joines was the first to put the giant blue bird into motion. Joines said the sculpture was a nice addi-

tion to the city known for its art and innovation.

He told those in attendance to be on the lookout for more in the future.

"We proudly call ourselves 'a city of arts and innovation' and we are moving toward the day when that is really apparent in downtown and in every section of our city," he continued. "The new Twin Arches installation on Highway 52 on the approach to Innovation Quarter is an immediate announcement of this fact to visitors from the south, and upcoming work on

Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard will make another bold statement about our Winston-Salem mindset. There is certainly more to come."

"Interactive Bird" will be on showcase in Winston Square Park for an entire year.

For more information on the sculpture or the contest visit the art council's official website at intoharts.com. You can also visit the AIAWS website at aiawinstonsalem.org.