

Initiative

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mentary students who lack funds.

Hyman mentioned they will be holding listening sessions and other events to ensure they are addressing the real issues. Hyman also said they will look to partner with the local colleges and universities in the New Year.

"We want to build our partnerships with Wake Forest, Winston-Salem State and Salem College to make sure our students know about philanthropy work and how important it is because they are the future," he said. "There has to be someone to carry on this work."

When discussing the future of the initiative, Sabrina Slade, Winston-Salem Foundation director of strategic initiatives, said she was proud to see what the new board chair is looking to accomplish in the new year.

A native to Winston-Salem, Slade mentioned often times, nonprofits

don't take the time to listen to what the people want.

"It excites me that we're doing this the right way," continued Slade. "We all have good intentions, but sometimes we don't take the time to listen. There are too many people who don't have a voice at the table, so this means we have to go to the people. We aren't going to start any new initiative without asking the people 'What do you think about it?'"

She said, "When I look around the room at our meetings, I don't see anyone who lives in low-income housing communities. It could be because of the time, it could be because they haven't been invited, but we want to change that; we want to listen."

Earlier this month, BPI also extended its endowment agreement with First Tennessee Bank (FTB), which has a local branch on West First Street. Five years ago, First Tennessee helped BPI start an endowment for the organization, providing an annual

\$10,000 match if the organization could raise \$10,000 of its own. So far the annual match has helped what would have been \$60,000 grow to \$107,000, according to a news release.

John Fox, chairman of First Tennessee's Mid-Atlantic region, said the bank, which is headquartered in Memphis, has always looked to invest in initiatives that uplift the community.

"We know how to do business in these communities and take the role of corporate citizen in these communities and do the things we need to do," said Fox. "I think BPI is one of the organizations that is central to those types of efforts here in Winston-Salem."

FTB's community development manager Angie Murphey said she felt good about the partnership with BPI because she felt confident in the efforts they were leading in the African-American commu-



Photo by Tevin Stinson

Teens from Authoring Action perform during the Black Philanthropy Initiative gala in October.

nity. "BPI saw potential in people that they didn't even see in themselves," she said. "BPI plays the role of thought leader when it comes to sharing what's really going on in the African-American community."

When discussing the endowment, Slade said that with the help from FTB and other local organiza-

tions, she feels confident that BPI will continue to grow and make an impact in the community. She said far too often black philanthropy organizations disappear without any warning.

"We see it all the time here in Winston-Salem: For whatever reason, a lot of nonprofit organizations close their doors before they make a real impact, but I don't see that happen-

ing with BPI. This initiative is here to stay."

For more information on how to submit an application or on the BPI listening sessions, visit the Winston-Salem Foundation website at wsfoundation.org. The initiative is listed under the community leadership tab.

Message

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James Perry, president of the Urban League, delivered the message on the principle of Umoja, or unity.

Each night of Kwanzaa is represented by a different principle. The other principles are Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity) and Imani (Faith).

In his address to the nearly 100 people, Perry discussed issues that create a glass ceiling in black communities, including poverty.

"Poverty is a systemic issue," said Perry. "Systems are failing our people and failing our communities. Sometimes these systems are designed to make sure people are poor, and as African-Americans, we are front and center in every single one of those systems."

As a solution to the growing issue, Perry suggested that the community practice other spending habits. While many believe the money just isn't there, or that blacks aren't willing to support each other, Perry mentioned cooperative economics is happening in our community but often times it goes unnoticed.

As an example, Perry showed a slide show of money donated to the black church.

"As CEO of the Urban League, I hear it all the time: 'Why aren't black folks pooling our money together?' But here's the interesting thing: I think we do practice cooperative economics and unity," Perry said.

"Think about black church revenue. In 2015, black church revenue in North Carolina reached \$20 million. The budget to run the entire state is \$21 million. The money we put into the black church is enough money to run our own state."

According to Perry, since 1980 African-Americans have donated \$420 billion to the black church.

"I want to be clear that I'm not beating up on the African-American church because we would not be here today if it was not for the black church, but my point is that there is no lack of funds in the community and there is no lack in cooperative economics because we have money and we are pooling that money."

Perry said the real ques-

tion is, what is the next step for the black church? He said the community must look at poverty as a Civil Rights issue as well as a systematic problem. He mentioned in order to overcome the racial wealth gap that has existed since the beginning of time, blacks must change their way of thinking.

Perry also mentioned the community should stop relying on what the government and other systems provide.

"We have smart kids, we're creative but we aren't getting there by relying on the school system and the assets that are provided to us. We may be enjoying them, but we aren't benefiting from them. If we don't rethink our approach, nothing will change."

During the opening night ceremony at the Enterprise Center, longtime theatre director and library director Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin was honored for her hard work and dedication to uplift the community and bring people together. As the executive producer of the National Black Theatre Festival, which is produced by the N.C. Black Repertory Theatre Co., every two years Sprinkle-Hamlin plays an important role in showing blacks and the greater community what can happen when we all work together.

Every two years the festival of black theatre brings over \$100,000 to the area.

After accepting her award, Sprinkle-Hamlin thanked those in attendance for support over the years.

"All the things I do here in Winston-Salem would not be possible without you," said Sprinkle-Hamlin as she stood before the crowded room. "In order for us to grow as a community, we have to work together, and I am thankful that I have had your support."

Local educator and minister the Rev. Dr. Felicia Piggott-Long said Kwanzaa's 50th birthday couldn't have come at a better time. She said with everything going on in the country today, Kwanzaa should be a time when we recommit ourselves to the fight to build strong, sustainable communities.

"This is about our collective emancipation, our collective liberation, and us coming together in order to move forward," said Piggott-Long. "It's exciting to see Kwanzaa reach this milestone, but we still have a lot of work to do in the African-American community."

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