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'A giant among men' Victor "Vic" Johnson dies at age 85

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

Former educator and longtime member of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education, Victor "Vic" Johnson died last week from complications from COVID-19. Johnson, 85, was recently infected with the virus and was being treated at Forsyth Medical Center when he passed away on Wednesday, Jan. 21.

While most people knew him as a member of the board of education, the legend of Vic Johnson began in 1960. On Feb. 23, 1960, Johnson and ten of his classmates from Winston-Salem Teacher's College (now Winston-Salem State University), and 10 students from Wake Forest College (now Wake Forest University) staged a sit-in at a local lunch counter downtown. The courage of the students led to desegregation of all lunch counters in the city.

Johnson graduated from Atkins High School and served three years in the U.S. Army before attending Winston-Salem Teacher's College. After graduating in 1961 with a bachelor's of science degree in elementary education, Johnson started



Submitted photo

Victor "Vic" Johnson (right) is recognized by Elwood Robinson, Chancellor of Winston-Salem State University during the 60th anniversary of the start of the sit-in movement in downtown Winston-Salem.

working for the local school system as a teacher at Paisley Middle School while working on a master's degree in education at N.C. A&T State University. He stayed at Paisley for a decade before moving on to North Forsyth High School in 1971. In 1983 Johnson was named assistant principal at Carver High School, where he stayed until he retired.

Johnson joined the school board in 1996 and served as the representative for District A until 2018. Johnson's commitment to education and uplifting young people continued through retirement. He was a regular volunteer at several schools throughout the district and sponsored an annual golf clinic for children who have never played the game.

When discussing the clinic and his passion for uplifting young people with The Chronicle in 2018, Johnson said, "My motto when I left school was 'enter to learn, go out and serve,' and that's what I have tried to do the last 40-some years." For his service to the community, Johnson was awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, one of the most pres-

tigious awards presented by the governor of North Carolina to individuals who have a proven record of "extraordinary service to the state."

Before presenting Johnson with the award, N.C. House Representative Donny Lambeth said Johnson was dedicated to making life better for people.

"Anyone who has

lived, worked or attended school in Winston-Salem recognizes the name Vic Johnson. Throughout his life, he has served to make life better for the citizens of Forsyth County," Lambeth said. "His name suits him well - 'Victor' - a champion and a hero to many."

Dozens of people took to social media to send condolences to the Johnson family. Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough, who attended North when Johnson was there, said his former principal was a giant among men.

"Mr. Victor Johnson - A Giant Among Men," Kimbrough wrote. "He served, led and impacted so many of us. He was my principal at North Forsyth High School. He was my encourager as a young boy and as a seasoned professional. He is the man who taught me how to use the sticks in golf. We are saddened because of his transition; yet I am comforted knowing that he is not with us physically, but always in our hearts as he exists among the other greats spiritually. Yes he was a giant among men."

For Coach McRae, it's all about the kids

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

When a coach takes interest in your athletic success, off the field activities, and how well you do in the classroom, you know they truly care about your well-being. As a youth football

coach, Juan McRae not only believes in those ideals, he lives them.

McRae has been a youth football coach for nearly two decades. During that time, he has coached for several organizations around the area such as the South Fork Panthers, Kernersville Warriors, Winston-Salem Falcons and the Winston-Salem Steelers.

Football has been a part of McRae's life since he was eight years old when he began playing Pop Warner. His coaching career began by chance as he was checking out organizations for his son to play in.

"My oldest son was talking about playing flag football, so I tried hanging around the football field to see exactly what



Photo by Alphonso Abbott Jr.

McRae enjoys building relationships with his players as much as he enjoys coaching them.

organization I wanted him to play with, because he wasn't old enough to play yet," McRae said about his start in coaching. "I started hanging out at the Falcons field and Scott Walker, league representative of the Winston-Salem Falcons, saw me out there looking and said I should coach, and I didn't even know the guy at the time."

"So, I reached out to my uncle, who had coached before, and he said he would help me. Me, him and another guy got us a little flag team with the Falcons, because they already had the kids and everything and that was the year I started."

His first year coaching was with five- and six-

See McRae on A8

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