

# 'Voices' Program Helped Guide Northwest Into Incorporation

Northwest is one of the oldest rural communities in the county. Many of its families—the majority of which are African American—had lived there and farmed its rich coastal land for more than 100 years.

But in recent years, complexities and demands of modern life made it difficult for residents to accomplish tasks and meet needs that were simpler in the past. Services which urban residents take for granted were denied to the 489 residents of Northwest because the community was never incorporated as a city.

Jessie Miller, who retired to Northwest in 1991 to care for her ill mother, recalls the problems facing Northwest community.

"Though we had a firehouse, we had no equipment to run it. We could have used the firehouse as a community center as well, but we had no heating nor chairs for people to sit in during meetings. We have a large water and sanitation plant, but the water was piped past us to the beaches. Services such as police and fire protection seemed beyond our reach. We lost a home here last year because the fire trucks had to come all the way from Leland, which is approximately 10 miles away. There had been discussions over the past few years about Northwest becoming incorporated as a city, but there was lack of communication and organization to make this a reality."

Then, two elements gave the 489 residents of Northwest the clout to turn an old community into a new city: the efforts of a local leader and business owner named Jerry Munn and a rural program named Community Voices.

"Mr. Munn has been working tirelessly for several years to get our community incorporated," Miller says. "Then he found out that the town of Sandy Creek was planning to rezone and extend its boundaries within a mile radius of the center of their town. This would have cut Northwest in half. Sandy Creek is a relatively new community; they wouldn't know the needs of families who have been here for generations. Nobody sought us out to discuss this, to hear our opinion. But, it was also fortunate that the Community Voices program was introduced at about the same time we learned of Sandy Creek's plans."



JESSIE MILLER (left), a Community Voices graduate, and Pearl Stanley, home economics agent with NC A&T's Cooperative Extension Program, stand in front of Miller's home in the newly incorporated town of Northwest.

Community Voices is a rural leadership development program administered through NC A&T's Cooperative Extension Program and funded in part by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. Pearl Stanley, an A & T home economics agent with Brunswick County's Agricultural Center, explained how Community Voices works.

"A program such as Community Voices allows people to help themselves, to reach a group consensus from within their own community,"

she said. "Community Voices conducts 13 training sessions over a 14-week period. These sessions cover topics such as group leadership, problem solving and community involvement skills. Fundraising methods were also studied. These skills are reinforced through videotapes, exercises and role-playing. The sessions also help to identify and encourage emerging leaders—people who have the potential to help bring about positive change in their communities, but who did not know how

to fully realize this potential."

Jessie Miller said one of the most important concepts promoted through the Community Voices sessions was follow-through:

"Sometimes, in the past, a group would arrive at a decision, but things would fall in the cracks. Since I was retired, I had the time to follow through. Often, it would just take an extra telephone call or a personal visit to a church or a government agency to bring the job to completion."

"Another important skill was how to obtain a group consensus; success is much easier to reach when the goals are clearly stated and you know you have the support of a majority of people you're working with."

The first Community Voices training session took place on March 19, 1992, in the town hall of the neighboring city of Navassa. The 19 participants—nine men and 10 women—graduated on May 9.

The graduates proceeded to promote community interest in incorporation. There were bake sales, fashion shows and other fundraising events. The first public meeting for the proposal drew a standing-room-only turnout. There were letter-writing campaigns to legislators, public agencies and private-sector businesses. When Rep. Thomas Wright approached the General Assembly in February 1993, he had 13 pages of signatures from people in and around Northwest urging incorporation.

On June 26, Northwest became the 18th incorporated city in Brunswick County; its first mayor was Jerry Munn.

Miller said some benefits, such as

a new fire truck and fully operational fire department, happened quickly with incorporation, but other goals will take more time.

"We are starting out slowly because we want to keep our taxes as low as possible, especially for the first few years. Now that Northwest is incorporated, our 489 people have the same rights as a city of 15,000. We're now eligible for grants and

hope to build a recreation center for our youth and our elderly.

"We also hope to attract more industry here, which will give us more tax support. We can't do everything overnight, but this is the first step in the right direction."

For more information about Community Voices, call Pearl Stanley, Brunswick County Agricultural Center, (919)253-4425.

## State Auditor Will Attend Feb. 16 Trustees' Meeting

State Auditor Ralph Campbell Jr. plans to attend the next meeting of the Brunswick Community College Board of Trustees, set Feb. 16 at the main campus north of Supply.

A reception honoring Campbell will be held in the multipurpose room of the administration building from 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. The public is invited, said Linda Phillips, a former Southport alderman who now serves as Campbell's special assistant.

After his election in 1992 Campbell set a goal of attending a meeting of each member campus of the state university system and community college system during his first 18 months in office.

As part of his effort to effectively communicate with two systems, at each meeting Campbell presents his goals and objectives for the Office of the State Auditor. The state auditor is required by law to audit universities and community colleges each year in order to maintain accreditation standards and to protect their bond ratings.

Prior to his election as state auditor, Campbell served as a Raleigh

city councilman for four terms and was an auditor for the state departments of insurance and revenue and the state health benefits office. He has a bachelor of arts degree in business administration from St. Augustine's College.

Campbell serves on the N.C. Council of State, N.C. Information Resource Management Commission; N.C. Local Government Commission; N.C. Capitol Planning Commission and N.C. Educational Facilities Finance Agency Board.

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# Ordinance Amended To Allow Relocation Of Old Mobile Homes

BY ERIC CARLSON

Owners of older mobile homes breathed a little easier Monday night after the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners agreed to amend a zoning ordinance requirement that would have prohibited them from moving the trailers to another lot.

The zoning law that went into effect Jan. 3 originally stated that manufactured homes constructed prior to July 1, 1976 could be given an occupancy permit only if the applicant submitted a notarized report from a licensed inspector certifying that the home meets code requirements set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The law would have prohibited anyone from bringing a pre-1976 manufactured home into the county and also would have prevented an existing mobile home of that vintage to be moved to another lot within the county.

County Planning Director John Harvey on Monday told the commissioners that "more public concern has been expressed about the 1976 cut-off than on any other matter" since the zoning law became effective.

"There are a number of people each day who are coming in for permits, telling us they have an earlier-than-1976 or -1970 unit they live in and wish to relocate in the county, or sell to buy a newer unit," Harvey said.

Several mobile home owners and dealers attended Monday's meeting to voice their concerns.

"I want you to consider that there are some older mobile homes that are in better shape than new ones," said Roger Fowler of Sunset Harbor. "My daughter also owns one and her landlord keeps raising the rent. He

knows she won't be able to move it because of this law. And she just bought it a year ago."

Alice Gray said the law, as originally written, would deprive mobile home owners of rights enjoyed by other citizens.

"We spend our hard-earned money on our homes just like anyone else," she said. "We pay our taxes. But we might want to put them on a different lot. You should allow those who live in Brunswick County to move if they want to."

Manufactured home dealer Gerald Beck said the law would put a financial hardship on mobile home owners even if they did not intend to move.

"We all need to ask ourselves how we would feel if we found out that the equity we've built into our homes was taken away with the stroke of a pen," he said. "There are hundreds of others out there in that position besides those who came here tonight."

Commissioners Chairman Don Warren, an insurance agent, said he frequently writes policies for older mobile homes and agreed that their condition cannot necessarily be determined by age.

"I've seen '65s that look better than '85s," he said.

Harvey suggested an amendment to the proposed ordinance change that would allow mobile homes that were set up and connected to utilities as of Jan. 1, 1994 to be moved to other locations in the county. Mobile homes built before 1976 could be brought into the county only if they comply with standards set by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

The revised amendment was adopted by the board in a unanimous vote.

# GOP's Anderson Files Third Time For 7th District Seat

Robert C. Anderson of Fayetteville filed Monday seeking the Republican nomination for the 7th Congressional District seat held by U.S. Rep. Charlie Rose.

Anderson, a retired U.S. Army attack helicopter pilot and entrepreneur, is making his third consecutive attempt to unseat Rose, who has held the seat for 22 years and is ranks among the senior leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives. He ran in 1990 and 1992.

Anderson was transferred to Fayetteville with the U.S. Army in 1978 and retired as a decorated lieutenant colonel after 22 years in service. He is president of a general contracting company.

Describing himself as the "voters' champion for change" and a "real conservative" with a "proven record

of action and courage," Anderson said the top issues of his campaign will be crime control, taxes and health care.

He opened his campaign with an attack on incumbent Charlie Rose as "an embarrassment to the people of the 7th District" and an "entrenched liberal." He asserted Rose is "too

busy pretending to be a contender for the House Speaker's chair to spend any time meeting the needs of the district voters."

Anderson also attacked GOP primary opponent, Fayetteville attorney Jim Cooper, as a "tax and spend liberal lawyer with a pro-tax, anti-citizen record much like Rose's."

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