

Mayor Yvonne Johnson shares her vision

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Reflecting upon her 14 years as a City Council member, Yvonne Johnson referred to herself as nothing more than a public servant. Her goals are, and have always been, to benefit the people of Greensboro and to assist them by participating in the government.

Johnson's career as a self-proclaimed public servant began over 30 years ago when she first became involved in the community. Her efforts included volunteering within the community, working for the Summit House Program and the United Way, along with numerous other organizations. Through her commitment to volunteer work, Johnson became acquainted with various different people practicing different lifestyles. She now believes such opportunities, along with her many connections, not only helped her become a council member, but also the latest mayor of Greensboro.

Johnson's positions did not come easily; she never believed she could win elections in her earlier days. When she first ran for the City Council, Johnson ran a grassroots campaign with a diverse committee and help from friends and family.

Such political involvement was only the start. After serving on City Council and holding the position of Mayor Pro-Tem in Greensboro, Johnson won the mayoral election on Nov. 6 and was sworn in on Dec. 4 at City Hall.

"I originally considered running for North Carolina Senate, but I quickly realized I'm happy where I am. When I say I am your public servant, I mean it," Johnson said, in response to a question of whether or not she planned on running for an office higher than mayor.



Newly elected Greensboro City Council members include (from left to right): Mike Barber, Council Member District Five; Goldie Wells, Council Member District Two; Sandra Anderson Groat, Council Member, Mayor Pro-Tem, At Large; Former mayor Keith Holliday; Trudy Wade, Council Member District Five; Newly elected Mayor Yvonne Johnson; Zack Matheny, Council Member District Three; Mary Rakestraw, Council Member At Large; and T. Dianne Bellamy-Small, Council Member, District One. Johnson was sworn in on Dec. 6 at City Hall and has plenty of time to prove herself before the next election in 2011.

As to why she won the election, Johnson answered regarding the importance of Greensboro residents having a voice in their government.

"I want the people to believe that they are not separated from their government. I believe a lot of people feel this way, and I would like to change that," said Johnson.

Community involvement is important to Greensboro's new mayor, and when she says "people," Johnson means all of the people in this city.

"I went to every district, from the smallest of churches to the largest of synagogues; from the Philippines Festival to the Iranian New Year. I love Greensboro's diversity. We have 87 different ethnic groups in this city, and we are not capitalizing on the gifts of this diverse population," said Johnson.

Johnson did not win her election by just making herself available to the community. Her campaign committee raised over \$90,000 through endorsements and the help of the many friend-

ships she has developed over the years. The Koury Center hosted a Kick-Off, attended by over 700 people, and Johnson believed the event played a part in her victory.

Now that Greensboro voters elected her mayor, Johnson has big plans for Greensboro. Unemployment and specifically the loss of jobs in the textile industry have caused many problems in North Carolina. Mayor Johnson plans to resolve this setback with the help of the many colleges and universities in the area. Greensboro has several colleges and universities, and with the help of their resources, along with new types of industry, Johnson hopes to make additional jobs available to more people.

Honda Jet, a company that builds small airplanes and sells them to private owners, is one of these new industries that Johnson hopes will bring jobs to the people of Greensboro. While the engines for the new jets are built in Burlington, the actual planes themselves will be

manufactured in Greensboro. Once this business picks up, it will create over hundreds of needed jobs for the community.

Other industries Johnson believes can help bring jobs to Greensboro already exist or are in the process of being created. The Gateway Technology, in its first year, will help to create over 30 new businesses. Cone and Wesley Long Health complexes are developing more technology and in turn more job positions.

Besides bringing more jobs to the community, the numerous colleges and universities in Greensboro are an excellent resource for Think Tanks, another of the new mayor's programs that she would like to enact. Think Tanks are comprised of students from different colleges and universities. They come together to discuss difficult issues in society and determine methods for solving problems. Think Tanks are just one more way that Johnson believes she can help the citizens of Greensboro become more involved in the government.

Johnson listens to the people because it is part of the job description of a public servant. A major issue among students and adults throughout the entire country is protection of the envi-

ronment. She has her own ideas for preventing the earth from growing worse and helping fix what many environmentalists have already attempted.

"We need to do all we can not to add to the problem of global warming," said Johnson. Her plan to aid Greensboro in helping the world is to make the city more like other Cool Cities. A Cool City maintains a policy that people must live in an environmental-friendly way; to drive ecologically-sound vehicles, such as hybrid electric cars; and to utilize alternate energy sources. Greensboro has already begun this process with the building of the Proximity Hotel, which has solar panels on the roof with only environmentally friendly materials applied throughout the entire construction.

Meeting Yvonne Johnson during journalism class was an honor for the entire "High Life" staff. Her willingness to visit the morning of Dec. 4, the same date she would be sworn in as mayor, impressed the staff immensely. Her devotion to the city is evident. She inspired many young journalists to engage more closely in politics and to seek ways to contribute to the positive growth of Greensboro. Mayor Johnson is truly a public servant.

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