



Williams family thanks community for support after 1999 tragedy

Ability to overcome fire was aided by religion and local organizations

BY DERRICK ARMSTEAD
Staff Writer

Seven months after suffering one of the biggest tragedies in his life, Walter Williams, along with his two children, Shanteia and Corone, believes that the ability to move forward was greatly influenced by the generous nature of the community and a strong commitment to religion.

In November 1999, the Williams' home off North Broad Street was completely destroyed by fire, leaving them without most of their possessions or clothing.

As a result of last year's incident, Williams has received a steady influx of support from the local community.

"There were people bringing donations from the American Legion, the churches were there, Red Cross helped out, Pebbles gave gift certificates, Regulator provided Thanksgiving dinner, and Emmanuel Pentecostal Church helped," Walter Williams said.

The local Girl Scouts organization gave some help, and as far as (former fire chief) Lynn Perry

goes, he took care of a lot of stuff, including helping us out with furniture and other items."

Walter Williams also relayed his thoughts during, as well as after the devastating blaze.

"I was out raking leaves when the fire started. There was a lot of flames and they were shooting out all the windows...It looked like somebody was going through the house with a flame thrower," Williams said.

"Everything I worked for was just going up in smoke. I couldn't save anything. It was kind of confusing and I just blocked everything out."

When the fire started, Walter Williams attempted to enter the trailer, but smoke and flames drove him out.

In addition to the specific organizations mentioned, Walter Williams also heaps praises on the entire community due to its commitment to help out a fellow citizen.

"Before this incident I knew that they (Edenton) were good," Williams remarked.

"But now I realize even more that Edenton will pull together...if they have got a helping hand they will definitely assist you when you need it."

Proof of Walter Williams' comments in reference to the benevolent nature of

the community was, and continues to be displayed by his employer, Edenton Manor Apartments.

"The manager of Edenton Manor came out after the fire and said you have a place to stay," said Walter Williams.

"If it wasn't for this place, it would probably be a lot of staying here, or staying there, so they've been a big help. Thank God that I had some-

where to stay, and still have somewhere to

stay."

As the father of two teenagers, Walter Williams was concerned with the emotional aspect of the incident.

"It hurt, I was in tears,"

Shanteia Williams said," adding, "...I cried a lot." Walter Williams, while referring to his son, Corone, states, "he brought himself together pretty quickly."

Shanteia Williams admits that

her ability to overcome the situation was aided by her dedication to religion.

"Whenever I go through problems, I talk to God a lot," she said. "It might be hard and you may struggle, but you'll pull through in life. It was stressful... and teachers, principals, and everybody kept asking me if I needed anything."

The experience has also left Walter Williams' oldest child with a deeper appreciation for her father.

"I realize, now, that it's hard for my daddy as a single parent," Shanteia Williams uttered.

"After facing everything that he did during and after the fire, it's not easy doing it by yourself."

As far as the future is concerned, there are plans to return to the former location, according to Walter Williams.

"I would love to have a trailer put on the same spot," he said.

"It's a nice spot, because it has a lot of quiet area."

Walter Williams relayed that his life-changing experience and the aftermath that followed has been unforgettable.

"As a single parent, the ability to take care of things following this, that's what really worried me...but I never let go," Walter Williams said.

"The community helped me out. You can't say anything bad about them (local citizens). I thank them to the bottom of heart."



Top: Pictured is the present-day scene of the Williams' former home off North Broad Street in Edenton, seven months following the November 1999 fire. (Staff photo by Derrick Armstead)



Left: Walter Williams and his children, Shanteia and Corone, pick through the burned rubbish outside the Williams' mobile home. (Chowan Herald file photo)

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