

Chronicle Profile

There's plenty in her briefcase

By AUDREY L. WILLIAMS
Chronicle Staff Writer

As a young girl, Barbara Ferguson imagined glamour and prestige whenever she spotted a briefcase. Today, at 46, she carries one of her own as director of management for the Winston-Salem Housing Authority.

"There's something more to a briefcase than just walking around with one," says Ferguson, "but I didn't find that out until I got one myself and there's plenty of work inside of my briefcase."

Ferguson also thought that since she always walked around with a pencil in hand as a youngster she'd spend the rest of her life as a secretary.

She was only half-correct. After graduation from North Carolina Central University in Durham, Ferguson went to work in a daycare center for one year. A stroll down the wedding aisle made her decide to get a job at Kimberly Park Terrace as a clerk cashier and that's when her career objectives began changing.

"I'm in my 24th year with the Housing Authority," she says, seated behind a her large, uncluttered desk, "and when I started working at Kimberly Park I never really realized that I would be at this agency for all these years. It's just one of those things that happened."

Experience with people and knowing the workings of a housing development directly as manager of Kimberly Park and later Happy Hill Gardens developments landed Ferguson her watchdog position in July 1981. She is the first black woman ever to hold such a post.

"I have never really looked at myself as being the first black woman to hold this job," says the Winston-Salem native. "It's whoever can do the job."

"I have a big responsibility and it's not because I'm a woman," she says, "but it's a big responsibility for anybody."

She manages all of Winston-Salem's conventional, low-rent housing, including Sunrise Towers and Crystal Towers for the elderly, and Turnkey III, a homeownership program for low- and moderate-income families. Ferguson also supervises the Section 8 plan that qualifies low-income families for rent subsidies on the private level and she sees to it that projects in the city's housing developments are

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operated according to Housing Authority guidelines. Ferguson is known among her colleagues as a person who goes above and beyond the call of duty, and life outside the job isn't much different, although she doesn't agree.

"Life away from the job may not be considered very exciting," she says, "but I'm home with a 14-year-old, a husband, and when I'm not singing in the senior choir, I direct the youth choir at Shouse Temple CME Church."

"I enjoy working with the kids," Ferguson says, "because it keeps them out of the streets. It's just not enough for kids to go to church. They need



On the weekend Barbara Ferguson is known as "Mother Hubbard," but by Monday morning she's back to being director of management for the Winston-Salem Housing Authority (photo by James Parker).

something to do, so I give them gospel music.

"And with a 14-year-old in the house," she says, "you have to do a lot of pacifying and when the both of us are frustrated, we go to Hanes Mall." She also has a 25-year-old son.

On weekends, Ferguson's basement is turned into a disco for some 25 teenagers, most of whom are her daughter's age and in her youth choir. Because of Ferguson's love for the young and their attraction to

her, she has been tagged "Mother Hubbard."

"Everybody has their own way of reaching kids," she says. "I reach them through the music. Whether it's through the choir or my basement, where I let them play all the Michael Jackson they want, kids are sensitive and they will go where there's love and warmth."

Ferguson, who says she often gets so lost in her Please see page A9

Calendar From Page A6

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

•Nomination forms for inductions into the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County High School Sports Hall of Fame may be picked up at the M.C. Benton Convention Center, all public and private high schools, all YMCAs and YWCAs in Forsyth County, Sportsman Supply, the Career Center and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth Co. Public Schools Administrative Office. The deadline for the return of applications will be Monday, April 2.

•The Forsyth County Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Abuse Awareness needs a slogan. The slogan can be submitted by any Forsyth County resident and must meet the following requirements: 1. It must be an original idea. 2. Seven words or less. 3. It must address both drug and alcohol problems. 4. It must be either printed or typed on a 3x5 card. 5. The slogan becomes the property of the coalition. 6. The deadline to receive the entries is March 19, with a postmark no later than March 17. A personal home computer will be awarded to the winner at the April 1 Balloon Kick-off. Mail entries to Drug/Alcohol Slogan Contest, P.O. Box 11757, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27116.

•The Winston-Salem Deafness Center needs volunteers to answer the phone and take messages in its office. Shifts are available mornings and afternoons on weekends. Anyone interested should call 724-3621, Ext. 140 or 120 or the Voluntary Action Center at 724-7474.

•The East Winston Restoration Association Inc. and the Business Department of Winston-Salem State University will provide free income tax filing assistance for anyone needing the service. Call 722-0918 for appointment times.

Beta Lambda Chapter will host Xinos confab

The Beta Lambda Chapter of the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa Inc. will host the Eastern Regional Xinos Conference at the Hyatt House in Winston-Salem, March 16-18.

The theme for this year's conference is "Profile's In Excellence in Education."

Mrs. Ruby Couche is the supreme basileus, Mrs. Ardena Dixon, Eastern Regional director; Mrs. Catherine Williams, Eastern Regional Xinos chairperson; Miss Beatrice Watts, local chapter basileus; and Miss Apryl Brandon, president of the local Xinos Chapter, who will preside over the conference.

The Xinos is an organization of girls in grades 9-12. The purpose is to lift the educational, ethical, moral and social standards of youth and develop within them a sense of social, educational and family

responsibility.

Mrs. Eva Jeffries and Mrs. Anna Gilliam are co-chairpersons of the local chapter and Mrs. Mary Ellis, Mrs. Maxine Brandon and Mrs. Bernice Tanner are Xinos sponsors.

The conference will open with a 7 p.m. banquet on Friday. An oratorical contest at 7 a.m. will open the Saturday session, with a fashion show at 1 p.m. and workshops beginning at 2:30 p.m. A banquet will be held at 7 p.m., followed by a disco and later a torch lighting service at 1 a.m. The conference will close with a worship service at 9 a.m. Sunday.

The banquet speaker will be Miss Lisa Brandon, a former Xinos and a student at Winston-Salem State University.

Xinos presiding at the conference will be Misses Apryl Brandon, Sabrena Boyd, Shan Bynum and Micha Jeffries.

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