

Thompkins plans retirement

Housing Director calls it quits after 35 years

By YVETTE N. FREEMAN
Chronicle Staff Writer

The executive director of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Housing Authority has announced his plans to retire, after nearly four decades with the agency.

In a letter to Dr. David Burr, chairman of the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners and the board members earlier this month, David L. Thompkins announced his retirement after 35 years with the Housing Authority. However, he said in an interview Wednesday that it was not an easy decision to make.

"I have mixed emotions. I don't think the job is completed," he stated. "And I knew I had to make a decision sooner or later, so a few more years... I can't have too much more of an imprint on that agency. And I think 35 years is enough to give to public service, especially wherein we work with over 3300 units and the total of over 10,000 persons under our administration. It can get tiring."

Thompkins' retirement will officially begin Dec. 31 of this year, but the 59-year-old says he has no plans of keeping a low profile. He stated that he is interested in getting involved in the private business sector and possibly running for some type of government office. "Also, I want to get on some boards, like other people, and try to make some rules and

regulations that can help somebody, and not hinder people," he said. But for now he says he has not made any definite plans, other than just relaxing for a while after his retirement. He stated, "I want to rest first. I want to depressurize myself."

Thompkins, who is a Winston-Salem native, first joined The Housing Authority in 1956, as manager of the Kimberly Park Project. Over the years, he received several promotions ranging from administrative assistant, to deputy director and eventually executive director.

"The best thing that I liked is that I was working with people that really needed help, and you needed the concern for and with. And everyday of my life and working, I could see where The Housing Authority, the agency that I worked for, helped somebody that really needed help. And helped somebody that was less fortunate than myself," he stated.

Once Thompkins retires, he plans to continue working with the residents of the public housing communities, possibly in a volun-



David L. Thompkins

teer capacity, because he says he really enjoys working with and helping the residents.

"I enjoy seeing families make economic progress through the years. And a number of our families have done that," he said. In fact, Thompkins is proud of the fact that both he and his staff have

encouraged the residents of public housing communities to get their GED's if they did not graduate from high school, and to try to send their children to college so that they (the children) can achieve economic success and in turn help their parents to have better lives.

In the last 35 years, Thompkins has seen several changes in The Housing Authority, many of which he says were for the better. But he says working for the poor is a continuous job and that the next executive director will have quite a challenge before him. Thompkins, however, says that although his job was indeed stressful, it was his enjoyment in what he was doing that kept him with the agency for such a lengthy period of time.

"I've enjoyed my 35 years in the Housing career, with the Winston-Salem Housing Authority. I never thought that I would have made it a career when I first joined the Authority in '56. But for some reason I just stayed and stayed and stayed and stayed and stayed, until it's time to go. I always say that there are times when you've got to know when to fold'em and you've got to know when to hold'em. And it's time to fold'em, for this situation. And I hope to move on to something else, where I will continue to be in contact and working for people that were not as fortunate as I was."

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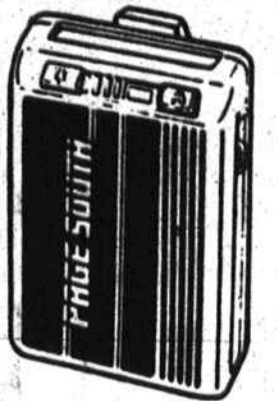
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WS/FC School Superintendent Larry Coble, Don Haver of R.J. Reynolds, and future students of the new Downtown School cut the ribbon at the school's dedication.

Downtown School to open Aug. 26

By YVETTE N. FREEMAN
Chronicle Staff Writer

Several of Winston-Salem's educational, city and county leaders, parents and students were on hand Monday, Aug. 19, for the ribbon-cutting and dedication of the new Downtown School, located on the lower level of the City Market building, 601 North Cherry Street.

A crowd of at least 50 people, including the school's principal, Connie Brown, and teachers, stood outside of the school and watched as WS/FC School Superintendent Larry Coble, RJR representative Don Haver and several children who will be attending the school, cut the ribbon to the entrance.

"We, in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools education family are pleased and proud through the example communicated through our downtown school proposal, to have been judged to be risk-takers by the RJR-Nabisco Foundation," stated Coble, just before the ribbon-cutting.

The new school was established with the help of a Next Century grant from the RJR-Nabisco Foundation, to deliver instruction that will emphasize experimental learning, higher order thinking, problem solving and knowledge application. The curriculum outlined in the state standard course of study will also be included in the program.

"Our education program in the Downtown School, as well as in our total program, must be directed therefore, to teaching students to think, to be flexible, to adapt, to invent, to solve problems, to retrieve, analyze and use information wisely. Our mission then, is to help students realize that there are unlimited possibilities ahead, and prepare them to make positive changes..." stated Coble.

Coble's optimism was reinforced by several of

the parents whose children will be attending the school. Valjean Griggs, whose seven-year-old daughter Curtisha Ingram is enrolled in the school said, "I think this is a wonderful opportunity for the children. It is my desire that the entire system could be like the downtown school. And I'm very happy that Curtisha has the chance to expand and to grow."

Mike and Patti McGill, whose daughter Sara, also seven, is enrolled at the school, feel that this is the beginning of a new era of education. "It's an opportunity that comes once in a lifetime," said Mike McGill. "This is going to be the education of the future, I do believe."

The Downtown School is scheduled to open Monday, Aug. 26, along with the other schools in the system, with 120 students from kindergarten through the third grades. The kindergarten students will report to school on Tuesday, Aug. 27. Over the next three years, additional students, up to 360, will be accepted to the school, which will then consist of kindergarten through the fifth grade.

Class sizes will be about 15 students per teacher, therefore giving special attention to students' self-esteem; achievement in academic, social and cultural areas, and to helping students become active and curious learners.

Students will have the option of choosing how long they stay at the school during the day. Children, age three through five, can attend from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. each day, while other students will stay from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Those students may participate in the entire extended-day program or either the before- or after-school sessions. All students can choose to participate in either the before or after school care, available from 7 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. and from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Students enrolled in the Downtown School were
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