

N. C. Black Leadership Caucus Remains Vigilant After 18 Years

By VERONICA CLEMONS
Chronicle Staff Writer

IN 1976, at the Holiday Inn in Chapel Hill, about 60 African Americans met with Gov. James B. Hunt's campaign manager to find out how they could increase black governmental participation.

From this meeting was born the N.C. Black Leadership Caucus, which had set a goal of increasing minority participation in the governmental process.

Then, there were only six black legislatures. Now, 18 years later, there are 25 and one is Speaker of the House Dan Blue. And those who attended the original meeting, like Rep. Mickey Micheaux, D-Durham, now hold public offices.

"It was sort of like moving to another level in political participation," said Benjamin Ruffin, a one-time member of Hunt's staff and now a vice president at R.J. Reynolds Tobacco.

Ruffin, who is also a member of the UNC Board of Governors, added that now instead subcommittees getting information and then sharing it with the masses, blacks now have more people "sitting at the table" and playing significant roles in government.

"Dan Blue is the maestro," said Ruffin, "and the orchestra can't play

any music unless the maestro waves his wand."

On this 18th year of the caucus' existence, several hundred people came together at Winston-Salem State University two weeks ago. They met in a building formerly known as the all-black Anderson High School, and their purpose was to discuss and debate on how the black community might best meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Now that the conference is over and ideas have been viewed and discussed on several important topics, caucus leaders must look at the information gained and decide what to do with it.

Ruffin said blacks must remember that even though gains have been made in the political arena, blacks must not forget to participate.

"Our challenge is how to keep up with the changes," he said. "We also need someone to listen to the orchestra perform and know the notes being played and those being missed. If you don't know what tune is playing, you're not going to be in the policy."

One recurring message throughout the conference was that blacks must come together as a people to deal with the challenges the next century will present, and they must do it without any divisiveness due to social and economic differ-

ences. Lawyer Todd Burke said as long as there is this kind of separation there will always be problems. That was the main message in the opening message delivered by the Rev. John Mendez.

"If we're going to make it we've got to walk together and talk together," he said.

Standing together as one community will help blacks take back many of their communities that are plagued by drugs, guns and violence.

"It is our problem," the Rev. Stephen Falls said. "We must stand up as intelligent and law-abiding citizens and say we're not going to take it anymore."

While focusing on community, conference participants also said blacks must rid themselves of individualistic attitudes and think about "we" instead of "me."

"Some of us have got to shake some things off," said Lee Faye Mack, director of the East Winston Community Development Corp. "We shouldn't just sit back and draw checks. We should get busy and decide I'm going to touch someone's life."

African-Americans should also look to take back their communities economically. During a workshop on economic development partici-

pants discussed being in control of the funds that come into the community. Those funds are supposed to help those in the community, but too many times community members don't control the funds and end up not benefiting.

Part of the conference was dedicated to honoring those who have given of their time and service to the community through grass-roots actions or the political system.

Velma Hopkins, who bravely shut down an R.J. Reynolds plant to protest deplorable working conditions and extremely low wages, urged numerous blacks to vote when it was still dangerous to do so, and who took many youths in and help them achieve a higher education, was honored with the Forsyth County Pioneer Award.

Annie-Brown Kennedy was honored for her service in the legislature along with other retiring and deceased legislators at an evening gala.

An even bigger focus of the conference was the plight of the African-American youth. The youth had their own session to discuss issues that were important to them and adults talked about how to best guide the future leaders in a positive direction for the next century.

The solution came in the form of more adult responsibility and less

jails. Falls referred to the new jail in downtown Winston-Salem as another "hotel, Salvation Army Boys Club, community center and YMCA to hold our children."

Whatever the challenges, whatever the solutions, blacks have to look no further than the black community to find them, most agreed. Taking responsibility for one another, and actively participating in activities that can increase the quality of life for African

Americans such as voting will be necessary to meet upcoming challenges, they said.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson said blacks must realize only they can improve their situation.



Ben Ruffin (left) and Annie Brown-Kennedy

"We're not responsible for being born on the plantation," he said, "but we are responsible for not dying on it."

Forsyth County Donates Funds for New Dudley Products Plant

By VERONICA CLEMONS
Chronicle Staff Writer

Forsyth County commissioners agreed Monday night to spend up to \$120,000 to assist in the construction of an access road for a new Dudley Products manufacturing plant in Kernersville.

A capital investment of \$2.5 million for Dudley, the 75,000-

square-foot plant should create at least 100 new jobs.

Jim Lockery, director of economic development at Winston-Salem Business, said the company will be relocating from its current site off Interstate 40 in Guilford County.

Old Greensboro Road, the location of the new plant, will also be the site of a proposed Forsyth Tech-

nical Community College satellite campus, for which Dudley has agreed to donate up to eight acres of land for the campus if the state approves its construction. Dudley will also dedicate the access road, which will also be used for the proposed campus.

Edward Jones, deputy county manager, said this is the first Dudley project that has received county

assistance. Funds will flow from the county to Dudley through Winston-Salem Business, whose mission is to recruit companies outside of Forsyth County and encourage them to locate here.

Lockery said three criteria is used to determine if a business is worthy of recruitment: the economic impact the business will have on the community by determining

the capital investment, how much equipment will be used and the size of the building. Winston-Salem Business also looks at the number of employees and the quality of the jobs.

The county has similar criteria in determining if it will provide monetary assistance. Jones said it is based upon "the new net capital investment that ends up in our tax

books and the number of net new jobs."

Kernersville will make a match of county funds with \$80,000.

In addition to the Kernersville site, Forsyth Tech officials are also proposing a site at Carver Road/Lansing Drive in Winston-Salem.

Program For At-Risk Children Likely Helpful in Long Run

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munity responsibility," she said.

Students attend Best Choice Center after school during the academic year and for eight hours a day during the summer. Many of the children who attend the center at age 5 are already behind their peers because they do not know basic information to progress socially and educationally, Wheeler said.

She said a 4-year-old program will help these youths develop some of these basic educational and socialization skills needed before they reach age 5.

Students who attend the center are recommended by school officials, police officers and other social agencies who believe they are at risk of academic failure by way of their environment, poverty or social reasons.

Wheeler said many students who are enrolled in the center do not know basic information such as the alphabet and their addresses. Some must be taught to use their real names because they are still using nicknames. Programs that already exist in the Forsyth County educa-

tional system are government-funded Chapter One programs for "at-risk" 4-year-olds. The programs exist at Easton, Latham and Forest Park elementary schools.

Larry Fields, principal at Latham, said the program at his school has offered benefits to the students and their parents.

"We can reach out to the kids and their parents and remove some deficits and make sure they succeed at other grade levels," he said.

Another program, Head Start, is federally funded but is not regulated

by the school system and serves 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds. Students in Head Start are helped with social and educational skills needed in kindergarten.

It currently serves 409 children and is planning to expand by adding another class of 4-year-olds. This will increase the student population to 429. Head Start Director Margaret Adams said this age group is the program's largest clientele.

Since the program has been in a public school facility, Adams said it has been difficult to accurately track

the progress of Head Start students once they enter public school. But she has heard some good reports.

"By word-of-mouth, I've heard our children have been doing very outstanding in public school," she said. "They are well adjusted, used to the wide-open space and understand the structure."

Adams added that Head Start gives the children something they continue to develop once they enter school.

"They get social involvement and an educational background to

build upon," she said. "It really helps them socially with things like being away from home."

Adams and Wheeler said they have long waiting lists of eligible students for their programs. Best Choice currently has an enrollment of 125, and Wheeler said she had to turn away 150 prospective students.

A 4-year-old program in the school system, if located in the right places, Wheeler said, would help shorten her waiting list.

Studying of At-Risk Program To begin by School Board Members

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existing sites. Jessup said staff wanted to start out with a smaller number of students with intentions of expanding the program.

"It's more important to be sure the program is effective than serve a large number of students," he said.

Jessup said staff had been interested in serving more disadvantaged children, but the resources were not available.

But with \$650,000 set aside by the county commissioners and a proposed \$350,000 from the school

budget more eligible can be served. In addition to the money set aside for the actual program, the county has given the school board \$100,000 to plan the program's implementation.

Jessup said he doubts all of that money will be needed for planning.

Board member Dale Folwell cautioned other board members to remember the responsibility to the existing students while considering this new program.

He added that 26 out of the 31

elementary schools are already operating over capacity, and that trying to start the program by January was rushing.

"I see nothing magical about starting Jan. 1," he said. "If it's that important we should take time to develop it."

Board member Walter Marshall was pleased that staff wanted to move ahead with the program. He said the school system can have a positive impact on disadvantaged children by reaching them at an

early age.

"I like the idea," he said. "It's something we should have done a long time ago."

The program also has support from the Forsyth County Association of Classroom Teachers. Carolyn McKinney, president of the organization, said the program will help those children who enter kindergarten at a much lower level than their peers and most of the time never catch up with them.

Board member Jayne Goins,

however, said preparing children for kindergarten should be the responsibility of the parent, not the taxpayer.

"I consider this tax-funded child care," she said. "This goes above and beyond the expectations of the school."

Goins and some other board members have also expressed opposition to the program because the idea came from the county commissioner, initiated by Commissioner John Holleman.

They felt it is inappropriate for

the commissioners to dictate how educational funds are spent. But although commissioners approved to set aside the funds for the program, the decision to implement is left to the school board. The board did say, however, that the funds can only be used to implement a 4-year-old program.

If the board chooses not to have such a program, the funds must be re-entered into the county's general fund.

LIFT Academy and Citizens Coalition Join Forces

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fold. "We have high regard for (LIFT), but I don't think it was necessary for the Citizens Coalition to cease to exist as an organization," Griggs said. "We were one of the only organizations who had a hands-on approach with young people who were the perpetrators of much of the violence in this city."

Parmon said collaborative efforts, which provide better service to families, are probably going to be the future of non-profit organizations.

"When you combine the efforts you offer more complete services to families," she said.

Parmon added that organizations are no longer serving a youth

who has just one problem, but usually a youth and his family wherein a variety of services is needed. Organizations that come together can offer more wholistic services," she said. Funds to bring the coalition to LIFT Academy were made available during the short legislative session on crime through additional Community Based Alternative

funds. Forsyth County received \$163,571, with \$104,135 going to United Way for Integrated Youth Services. Under this line item, LIFT received \$64,805; \$21,070 went to the Urban League; and \$18,260 went to Forsyth Court Volunteers.

Griggs said the Citizens Coalition had applied for its own CBA funds and feels his board of direc-

tors — who Griggs felt secretly negotiated with LIFT — really didn't want to keep the organization.

"The leadership of the board of directors is very ignorant to the impact of the program on this community," Griggs said. "Their negotiations with LIFT didn't involve us. We just came in one day and the phones were switched to LIFT. ... It

was done in an unprofessional, condescending manner."

The rest of the funds were allotted to Youth Opportunity Homes: \$26,103 for Emergency Shelter and \$33,333 for New Group Home.

In addition to paying the added salaries at LIFT, Parmon said the funds will also be used to upgrade the computer system.

Sigma Gamma Rho National Boule Begins Friday in City

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and a donation to The Family Services Incorporated Child Development of Winston-Salem will also be presented. A major highlight of the event will be the launching of a cosmetics line by the sorority, Odom said. The product, *Pour Vous*, is owned and manufactured by Intra Africa Corp., a black-owned and operated company.

"This is a historic union

between a major black company and a sorority," Odom said.

There will also be Wellness Fair and a community-wide bone marrow recruitment drive Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Also on Sunday, there will be an Ecumenical service with several local ministers followed by development workshops. Later that night, there will be performance by Flonnie Anderson of Win-

ston-Salem. She will perform "The Quarters," a one-woman drama based on the novel "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman."

At 9 p.m. Sunday, there will be a '60s and '70s theme dance where prizes will be awarded to the best oldie dressers.

On Monday, there will be more workshops and the evening will be capped off with a Greek Step Show

that will feature performances from local Greek-letter organizations and Sigma Gamma Rho step teams from around the country.

On Wednesday, the Undergraduate Annie Neville Talent Luncheon will announce the national winners chosen from five regional talent winners beginning at noon.

The Blue and Gold Awards Banquet at 7 p.m. will bring the

Boule to a close. The keynote speaker, sorority member and motivational speaker Helen Owens, will talk on this year's Boule theme of "Sailing the Seas of Change in the 90's: Launching New Ideas, Challenging Traditions."

The Quality of Life Award will be presented to the Rev. Lonnie Dawson, a Goldsboro native who is pastor of New Mt. Calvary Baptist

Church in Los Angeles.

Dawson was chosen for the award because of his dedication to the education of children and his support of the community during the civil unrest in Los Angeles following the verdict in the Rodney King case.

All events will take place in the Benton Convention Center. For ticket information, call 748-0811.