

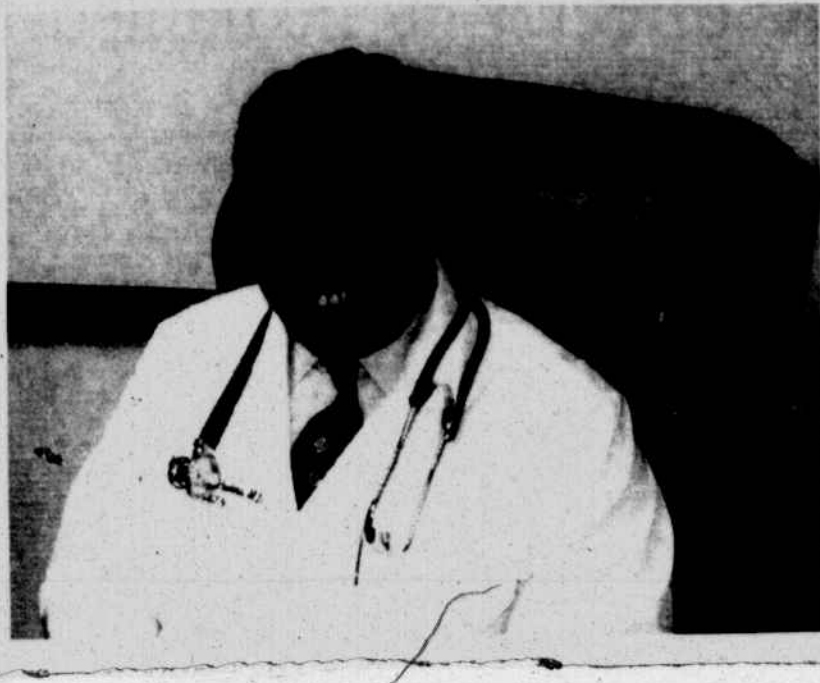
**HEALTH**

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But hard truth is part of caring, say the staff at Today's Woman.

There are no clients at the clinic. Instead, the preferred term is "member." The fresh approach of Today's Woman stands out from that of conventional health clinics; staff and members say that's one reason the clinic works.

Another reason is the level of community input. Everything that is part of the clinic is there because the Boston-Thurmond/Kimberly Park neighborhoods wanted it there. From the color of fabric on the sofas to the



by the clinic

word. "You don't come into a community with a plan," said executive director Linda Carter. "It is crucial to involve the community from ground up."

Though the clinic celebrates its second anniversary this month, the conception of Today's Woman Health and Wellness Center dates several years earlier.

In the early 1980s, Forsyth County boasted the lowest infant mortality rate in North Carolina. Just 10 years later, though, figures for Forsyth County show an alarming rise in infant death and premature birth.

"In particular, the Kimberly Park/Boston-Thurmond area had the highest rate of teen pregnancy and infant mortality," said Dr. Lawrence Hopkins, an obstetrician at the Winston East Aegis center and the medical director of Today's Woman Health and Wellness Center. The poor health suffered by women in those neighborhoods put Forsyth on the map, said Hopkins.

"It was an embarrassment,"

he stated. Forsyth remained one of the wealthier counties in the state, and boasted some of the best medical facilities in the country. Health providers asked, What went wrong?

A March of Dimes study reveals that competition between some of those prominent medical facilities was hurting the health of poor neighborhoods.

"In their battle for patients, they were overlooking a segment of the population," said Hopkins.

Armed with a \$12.5 million Medicaid fund, Carolina Medicorp Inc. stepped in to remedy the situation. Community health advisors and physicians were appointed to a task force, and an ongoing Community Needs Assessment was established.

In addition to infant mortality, the task force identified teen pregnancy as a focus for the targeted neighborhoods.

In addressing these problems, health providers need to know their population and its needs

thoroughly, said Carter.

"There's not a package that works for everyone," said Carter. "We've got to think outside of the box."

Instead of bringing these women to a clinic, the clinic was brought to the women. Located off from Old Cherry Street, the clinic straddles the Boston-Thurmond and Kimberly Park neighborhoods, so members of Today's Woman can walk to the clinic. Transportation is available for those who need it.

Equally important, the clinic provides childcare for its members. Children have both inside and outside play areas and volunteers to look after them.

The childcare areas are what attracted Akisha Dennis to Today's Woman Health and Wellness Center, who has visited the clinic regularly since it opened. Dennis received prenatal care at Reynolds Health Center, and she and her two daughters are now enrolled in the Women, Infants, Children (WIC) program,

provided through the health center.

Dennis likes the homey feel of the waiting area, which staff and members refer to as the living room.

"It feels comfortable," said Dennis. "The kids get to play, and I can come anytime. I like it better than Reynolds Health Center."

Shermeka Morris and her 4-year-old son are also enrolled in the WIC program, which provides bread, cereal, juice and dairy products like milk and cheese for pregnant mothers and their children up to age five. The program supplies the much-needed nutrition for Morris' son, who has an

But prenatal care is not only important for the baby, said Monique Ford. As a consultant for pregnant teens, Ford uses her past to teach girls the importance of their own health future.

When she became pregnant at 16, Ford tried to ignore her situation. "It was a total mental block," she said. "I didn't even show." A slender athlete, Ford continued playing sports the entire nine months. She even won a sit-up contest in her high school while she was pregnant.

Ford's fear of gaining weight drove her to exercise relentlessly.

"I saw my feet swelling up and I was like, girl, I got to go," she said. She would purposely show up to softball practice late to receive her punishment of extra laps.

All of that exercise benefited Ford's baby. However, a lack of prenatal care left the young mother nutritionally depleted and anemic.

"After I had the baby, everything was pulled out of me — all the vitamins, all the protein," said

Ford. "The baby literally feeds off your body if you don't get the proper nutrition."

This story hits home with the young girls to whom Ford speaks. And seeing the once-scared and self-denying teenage mom before them as a competent young woman gives the girls hope for their futures.

"People are very receptive to me," said Ford. "They're literally waiting to be educated."

The clinic also provides for those who are too shy to show up at Today's Woman, via lay health advisors.

"I go out in the community with my socks and tennis shoes

tion," said Barbara Williams. It's like compelling people to come to the center."

Williams travels the Boston-Thurmond and Kimberly Park neighborhoods, talking to women and recruiting them into the clinic.

Community outreach is essential to the program's success, because of the trust it promotes between members and staff.

The clinic serves as a type of clearing house to direct women to the programs and services they need, and agencies come into the clinic to work with women.

Besides having access to all CMI departments for their health needs, women are visited on site by the Breast Clinic for mammograms. Bowman Gray School of Medicine does testing and referrals for the clinic.

The Cooperative Extension holds budgeting, nutrition education, horticulture and cooking classes for clinic members, and Jack and Jill Inc. works on etiquette.

For drug and alcohol prob-

lems, the clinic refers women to the Department of Mental Health's WISH program, and also works with the Exchange/SCAN agency to prevent child abuse. The county's health department handles STD/HIV cases, and enrolls women in the Baby Love program.

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church offers counseling for women, and Crisis Control Ministries donates supplies and money for medication.

City and other local agencies are also involved with the clinic. The housing authority (HAWS) helps with recruitment, and the Martin Luther King Recreation

educational sessions. Water aerobics for pregnant women is taught at the YWCA.

The Junior League sponsors a "Read to Me" program to encourage early literacy, and Step One offers self-esteem classes.

"We're not just attending to their pregnant state — we're attending to their mental state; we're attending to their environment," said Williams, echoing the sentiment of her executive director.

The women who come into the clinic often have concerns outside of pregnancy, Carter said.

"We've got to deal with the whole woman, and stop just checking stomachs and bottoms," said Carter. "Psycho-social issues have to be dealt with in a real way."

Carter thinks others can learn from Today's Woman.

"Hospitals and communities can come together," she stated. "It takes a daring attempt on the part of the hospital, but a caring focus to make it happen."



Dilapidated commercial buildings in the Old Cherry area will be torn down to build housing.

**HOUSING**

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cut from revitalization efforts. But if the \$11 million housing and redevelopment bond passes this month, new life could be breathed into those neighborhoods.

Lett asserted that it's high time the city worked on these areas. "Essentially, we're still filling promises that go back [27] years," she added.

The \$11 million earmarked for the housing and redevelopment is the city's second general obligation bond commitment for housing. In the 1987 bond referendum, Winston-Salem devoted \$9 million in urban redevelopment bonds.

Those bonds passed 10 years ago began the first phases of the

city's plan to rehabilitate, clear and redevelop blighted areas. In the latest bond, \$5.3 million would be used for clearing and redeveloping the Lincoln/ Maywood and Old Cherry neighborhoods, as well as parcels in Northeast Winston and elsewhere.

In addition, the city's first-time home buyer assistance program would receive a \$3.7 million boost. Some of that money would be used to help people buy homes in the redeveloped neighborhoods and elsewhere.

The remaining \$2 million would go toward improving and expanding rental housing opportunities. The city would build approximately 185 new multi-family units, and would continue con-

tracting with private and non-profit housing providers for additional rental properties.

If the bond passes, the projects would be implemented between 1999 and 2003.

"There are primarily shotguns out here," said Lett, indicating the style of a row of houses in the Lincoln/Maywood neighborhood. Almost the entire street of this development that runs along University Parkway will be cleared and redeveloped. Lett would prefer a wholesale clearance but points out that several homes are in decent shape and deserve to be left alone.

"I really don't like spot clearance, but there are times when there are uses for it," said Lett.

**UNCLEAR**

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used to invest in industrial areas, downtown and everywhere, anywhere in the city where opportunities might develop," Stuart added.

Assistant city manager for community and economic development J. Allen Joines hinted that some money may go toward the Liberty Street project, but others aren't counting on it.

"City officials have been fairly mute on the issues," said East Winston Development Task Force chair person Norma Smith, "though they give lip service saying they want to get economic development." Smith said that she has not heard of any plans from the city to invest in East Winston development opportunities.

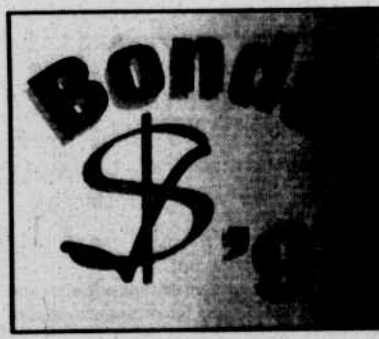
Some of the money may fund opportunities identified in the Enterprise Community study, said East Ward Alderman Joycelyn V. Johnson. Three years ago, the city applied to the federal government for designation as an Enterprise Community, which would have given East Winston a sizable grant for development.

Though the grant did not come through, the recommendations remain in place. Joines and Stuart have also said that economic development money could be used for those endeavors.

Though the downtown area is often volunteered as a potential development site, East Winston seems to enter the conversation as an afterthought.

"I can't blame city government completely," said Smith. "We have elected representatives who have been mute on the subject." Smith said that the African-American aldermen need to speak out more aggressively for economic development, or the city will continue to ignore East Winston.

As for the bond, Smith believes the money is already earmarked, but the city manager's office is trying to keep it quiet.



"They obviously have some plans — you don't just pull \$6 million out of the air," said Smith. "How could those aldermen just sit there and let it happen? Something doesn't smell right to me."

The East Winston Development Task Force is in a Catch-22, said Smith. It is only supposed to review and recommend economic development projects to the city, but these projects are not coming in.

The problem is that budding entrepreneurs must have capital before a project can be recommended. And capital is scarce, especially in East Winston. Smith wants to incorporate the task force, much like Downtown Development Inc., in order to help fund potential entrepreneur-

ial developments. Smith also thinks the city owes it to East Winston to "clean house."

"Projects aren't going to come to us unless elected officials make sure East Winston gets its piece of the pie, to make it attractive for entrepreneurs and businesses to come to East Winston," said Smith. The urban renewal programs of the 1960s did not include funds to rebuild the homes and businesses that had been removed, and many sections of the black community have languished since then.

Stuart thinks that the city has a good track record of supporting East Winston endeavors.

"A working familiarity with all we have done [to develop the black community] probably wouldn't leave a person in a position to wonder," said Stuart.

Again, Smith disagrees. "It's abysmally sad," said Smith. "For years, East Winston went completely unnoticed."

Smith advocated offering incentives to entice businesses into the area. "We have to do a better job of selling the area," she added.

**National Black Theatre Festival looking for volunteers**

The 1997 National Black Theatre Festival will have a volunteers' orientation meeting Monday, June 16, at 7 p.m. at the Arts Council Theatre, 610 Coliseum Dr. in Winston-Salem. Hundreds of volunteers are needed to make this year's festival a success. The areas of responsibility range from technical to social.

People with relevant skills are welcome as well as those without specific skills. The 1997 National Black Theatre Festival will take place Aug. 4 through 9 in the city of Winston-Salem.

Many opportunities are open for volunteers between now and the time of the festival. The list of jobs includes box

office, concession staff, hosts/hostesses, office assistants, drivers, production assistants, ushers and vendor assistants. Persons interested in volunteering should attend the orientation meeting June 16 or contact Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin or Joyce Elem at The National Black Theatre Festival office at 723-2266.

**Food for thought? You do the math.**

The very first computers weren't machines — they were people. And the most powerful computer of all is still the human brain. But the human computer requires lots of power. Research shows that kids who eat well perform better in the classroom and score higher on standardized achievement tests. That's true in math class, and every other class, too. Students who regularly eat balanced, nutritious meals simply learn better.

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