

# HAWS honors young movers and shakers

By T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

The board of commissioners of the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem took a brief detour Tuesday from the serious business of running the city's public housing units to spotlight two young movers and shakers.

HAWS Executive Director J. Reid Lawrence was all smiles as he introduced the person set to step into the shoes he previously filled.

Fulton Meachem Jr. was named the agency's new deputy executive director before a crowd that included many of his coworkers and some residents.

Meachem had served as the housing management supervisor since last May. He has also served as a housing manager, housing specialist and adult/youth services specialist since coming to the agency in summer of 1994.

"It's a dream come true," Meachem said, flashing a bright smile. "It has always been one of my aspirations to become deputy executive director since I first came here."

A native of Greensboro, Meachem received a bachelor's degree from North Carolina Central University in Durham.



Meachem

Meachem — who is a bachelor and just 29-years-old — has spent a large portion of his adult life in the business of helping people help themselves. He says he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I have always wanted to give something back to the community," Meachem said.

Although the job will bring a slew of new responsibilities,



Bill Andrews presents Takresha Duncan with a certificate and savings bond.

Meachem's supporters say he is more than up to the challenge. As deputy director, Meachem will monitor and evaluate the agency's Department of Housing and Urban Development programs and assist Lawrence with myriad tasks.

"He's been on my heels ever since I came here as executive director," Lawrence joked just before he introduced his new right-hand man.

An "obviously overwhelmed Meachem stood before the crowd of 20 or so people and said a few words of thanks. But not long after taking his seat, various people around the room were springing to their feet to thank Meachem.

A resident of Healy Towers thanked him for always taking the time to address residents' issues. A resident of Crystal Towers stood

up and gave similar kudos.

A board member even got into the act.

"I'm very happy because he's already one of ours," commissioner Louise Davis said of Meachem's appointment.

Meachem sat quietly as those around him sang his praises. He said later that the words of support mean a lot to him, especially when they come from the residents he's charged with serving.

"That is the ultimate compliment when they appreciate what I've done," he said.

But Meachem shared the wealth a little bit, not taking full responsibility for the strides he's made.

"The morale at the housing authority is very high because of the leadership of Mr. Lawrence," Meachem said. "We are all working together to achieve goals."

And even though he is still getting use to his new lofty title, Meachem already has clear ideas and a plan of action. A plan he hopes will aid the agency in its overall goal of changing the face of public housing.

"I plan on working with the city and everyone in the agency to build bridges for our residents so they can go from dependency to self-sufficiently," he said.

The betterment of public housing communities is also on the mind of 11-year-old Takresha Deveta Duncan.

Duncan was honored for penning an award winning essay on the topic of "ties that bind people and their communities." She picked up top honors recently in statewide essay contest sponsored by North Carolina Crime Prevention.

"This is something I feel real good about," board chair Bill Andrews said, just before he told the audience about Duncan's feat.

Young people living in public housing in Winston-Salem and cities and towns throughout the state were asked to write a short piece describing how people can become more intertwined with the communities they live in.

Duncan — who was accompanied by her mother Mary Geter — stood timidly before the crowd and read her now famous essay.

"There are many things that can bind people and their communities," she read. "I'm sure we could figure out something, now let's start naming some."

In her essay, Duncan paints a picture of a community where people hold block parties and street festivals to provide positive outlets for young people. In Duncan's ideal community, people also help each other and the neighborhood by holding fundraisers and awareness meetings on timely topics like drug abuse and teen pregnancy.

Duncan received a standing ovation, a shiny, framed certificate from Andrews and a \$200 saving's bond.

"I was a little nervous, but it was exciting," Duncan said later that evening in the living of, her mother's Cleveland Avenue Homes apartment.

Duncan is a sixth-grade honor student at Atkins Middle School. Between studying, she finds time to cheer for the Grayhounds Midget football team and participate in a bevy of afterschool pro-

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# 'Stinging' Helms wants to eliminate N.C. seats on court

Clyburn, CBC vow to fight "lily-white" circuit

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WINSTON-SALEM — Sen. Jesse Helms — still stinging from a nomination bottled up by Democrats eight years ago — wants to eliminate two vacancies for North Carolinians on the Richmond, Va.-based U.S. Court of Appeals rather than fill them.

Helms, who has already helped block the appointments of two of President Clinton's nominees to the 4th Circuit Court, filed a bill in the Senate last week to kill the positions. The federal circuits are the nation's second-highest courts, right below the U.S. Supreme Court.

Helms, citing the view of the court's chief judge, says two more judges aren't needed to handle the appellate court's caseload.

"There's not any space in between right and wrong," the North Carolina Republican said last week. "I want to have all the competent judges that we need, but I don't think we ought to have even one judge that we don't need."

The bill surprised judges and politicians, who have long hoped to fill the appeals court slots with North Carolinians, including the first black appointee.

Freshman U.S. Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., wanted to work with North Carolina's senior senator on forging a compromise to get

two judges appointed. Edwards, who was unaware Helms was filing a bill, says he has mentioned specific nominees to Helms, who raised no objections to them.

"I'm certainly hopeful that he's still willing to discuss them with me," he said.

The appeals court, which hears appeals from federal courts in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, has 13 active judges. Only one — Sam J. Ervin III — is from North Carolina.

The two seats Helms wants to eliminate would be filled by North Carolinians. One was created in 1990 and never filled. The other was held by a North Carolinian who retired in 1994.

Ervin said Friday the court needs 15 judges to field five three-judge panels to hear cases. Chief Judge Harvie Wilkinson has had to rely on federal judges from lower courts to fill in, Ervin said.

But Wilkinson said the court's caseload dropped 18 percent between 1998 and 1999.

"The court's docket is well under control," he said.

Helms has made no secret that he is still steamed that Democrats killed the appellate court nomination of U.S. District Judge Ter-



Helms

rence Boyle, who once worked for Helms. President Bush nominated Boyle to the appeals court in August 1991, but Democrats stalled it. Bush lost the 1992 election and nominating power went to President Clinton.

Clinton nominated two North Carolinians for the jobs in 1995: J. Rich Leonard, a federal bankruptcy judge in Wilson, and James A. Beaty Jr., a federal judge in Winston-Salem.

Beaty came under fire from Judiciary Committee chairman Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, who criticized him for voting to overturn a murder conviction because of a trial error. Clinton later renominated Beaty but not Leonard. Beaty would have been the first black judge on the appeals court.

Clinton will nominate federal judges from North Carolina based on recommendations from Edwards, but Helms has considerable power to bottle up those nominations.

Helms filed the bill about a month after Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., hinted he had a plan "to box in Mr. Helms."

Clyburn, the head of the Congressional Black Caucus, told a summit meeting, "We are not going to sit quietly and allow him to keep the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals lily-white."

Helms took offense. "This guy was accusing me of being a racist," he said. Helms openly supported Beaty when Clinton appointed him to the federal bench.

# Atlanta officials ponder Freaknik

Despite lack of planned events, party still on

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — Waning from a peak crowd of 200,000 five years ago, the annual street party known as Freaknik is just a shadow of its old self.

Freaknik, which draws thousands of black college students to Atlanta each spring, is just a month away, but the city has received no requests for permits to hold outdoor events. Two Freaknik Internet sites list no events and no advertisers.

Mayor Bill Campbell, who was criticized three years ago for eroding support for the event, has not appointed the 1999 Black College Spring Break Committee to orga-

nize the event. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported Sunday.

"My perception is that all the indications say that the event is going to be a non-event," said George Hawthorne, chairman of last year's spring break committee.

About 50,000 people visited Atlanta in 1998, when just one event permit was requested. At the party's peak in 1994, six event permits were requested.

"I think the event permits are a good indicator, and the Web sites that I have been monitoring ... are indicating that there's a lot less attention to Freaknik and a lot less attention to Atlanta," Hawthorne said.

Campbell's chief of staff, DeWayne Martin, says the city is still preparing to handle large crowds the weekend of April 16-18.

Martin said he didn't think the number of applications is a reliable indicator of the throng.

"We always take the position that we have the responsibility to prepare for guests and visitors no matter what that number may be," he said.

Freaknik has never been an organized event.

Atlantans who associate the party with traffic tie-ups are hoping the revelers will continue to head to events in Texas or Florida, which are scheduled at roughly the same time.

But Ronn Greene, who helps run the freaknik.net Web site, said the Atlanta party is still on.

"This thing is now 17 years old," Greene said. "It has existed by word of mouth. Even when there weren't events scheduled, people came to Atlanta."

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