

## Artist Synthia Saint James talks about her work

By PAUL COLLINS  
THE CHRONICLE

Well-known artist Synthia Saint James told an audience of more than 30 people Saturday that years ago she would often go to bed at 7 or 8 p.m. so that she could rise at 4 a.m. to paint before she had to go to her day job.

At that hour, she would be fresh after a night's sleep.

"I could give it my best," she said.

She had a passion for painting but did not earn enough income

from her art to support herself fully until eight years ago. Until then, she had to have a series of "day jobs" to provide the extra income. For example, she worked in accounting and had a tax business for several years.

Saint James talked about her career Saturday at an event called "Conversation with an Artist," held at Whistling Women on Brookstown Avenue.

Probably the most widely recognized work of Saint James is the U.S. postal stamp series of the African American celebration of

Kwanzaa. She has painted and/or illustrated more than 20 pieces and 50 book covers, including works by Alice Walker, Terry McMillan, Iyana Vanzant and Julia Boyd.

Before Saint James began her presentation Saturday, she chatted with several people before and during a brunch. It was a rather cozy affair as people sat about four to a table. A few people sat on cushions on the floor.

One of those attending was Debra James, coordinator of race relations at the Winston-Salem

Urban League.

"Her themes are ... happy, cheerful," she said of Saint James. "Some black artists, their work is depressing. She (Saint James) has almost an overwhelming joyful theme in her work. It's like a celebration of life. I enjoy her style and use of vibrant colors."

Saint James, a small woman who smiles often, began her talk by telling the audience that this was not going to be a formal lecture.

"I don't want to do anything

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Photo by Paul Collins  
Artist Synthia Saint James, right, chats while signing her book.

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Photos by Bruce Chapman

## Frye makes history

Longtime jurist becomes first black chief justice

By ANGELA BURRUS  
THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

RALEIGH - Former senior Associate Justice Henry Frye made history Monday by being named the first African American appointed as chief justice of the N.C. Supreme Court.

Frye, who will succeed Chief Justice Burley Mitchell in September, will be the 25th chief justice in the 200-year existence of the state judicial system.

"As a chief justice in the state, that alone means a great deal," Frye said at a news conference. "I suppose the fact that somebody can grow up in Ellerbe with nobody in the judiciary and come from a farm in a little place and rise to be the leader of a judicial system in North Carolina speaks well for North Carolina - speaks well for America."

Frye credits Gov. Jim Hunt, as well as other judges and legislators, in giving him the "opportunity and chance to lead us into the next millennium."

One of Frye's goals is to have

See Frye on A8

## Programs expanded

System increases number of school sites

By PAUL COLLINS  
THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system has increased the number of schools in which it offers several special programs.

The programs - which include a prekindergarten program for schools with large numbers of low-income families; a program that encourages parents to be more involved in their children's education; and the English as a Second Language program - will be offered at additional schools, and the system is also offering Cisco computer networking courses for the first time. The school system also has several new and converted schools.

Edna Crews, assistant superintendent for instructional services, said the school system has increased the number of schools in which it offers a prekindergarten program for schools in which a large percentage of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

This year the program will be offered at: Ashley, Cook, Diggs, Easton, Forest Park, Hall-Woodward, Kimberley Park, Latham, Mineral Springs, North Hills and Petree elementary schools. Last school year, the program was offered only at Easton and Diggs

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# Downtown's Poppin'

## Around NBTF: Tears, cheers and fears

By JERI YOUNG  
THE CHRONICLE

There's no such thing as a boring moment at the National Black Theatre Festival. Just ask any of the hundreds of people who gathered at the Adam's Mark Hotel at lunchtime Tuesday.

As actor Ossie Davis joined a host of celebrities for a news conference, NBTF founder Larry Leon Hamlin took a break to fret over locations, a county commissioner directed traffic and talked support for the city's largest cultural event, an elderly couple had the time of their lives and a 15-year-old got his big break.

Weary, but willing

The National Black Theatre Festival is only two days old, but



Hamlin

See Festival on A10

## Throng gathers for opening night gala

By FELECIA P. McMILLAN  
COMMUNITY CORRESPONDENT

There is a rumbling going on in Winston-Salem, and the reverberation can be felt around the world.

More than 1,000 African American theater enthusiasts followed the beat of the djembe drum during the opening night gala procession of the National Black Theatre Festival Monday.

Led by drummers and dancers from the Otesha Creative Arts Ensemble, the crowd formed a receiving line to watch as their favorite stars made their way down the aisle to the dais.

Larry Leon Hamlin, artistic director and founder of the NBTF, presented special guest Leslie Uggams as the 1999 chairperson of the festival. The audience formed a receiving line to embrace Uggams and the more than 40 celebrities of stage and screen. During the program, Hamlin recognized several living legends and announced his plans to establish the NBTF Hall of Fame and Museum. The museum will include memorabilia from stars of the stage and screen.



Dee

See Gala on A10



Photo by Jeri Young

Dancing has been a major part of the festival. Above, an unidentified man dances during an impromptu performance in front of the Adam's Mark Hotel Monday. Insets from left, acclaimed actor Ossie Davis accepts the Sidney Poitier Lifetime Achievement Award; actress Suzanne Douglas signs autographs for fans; actress Fay Hauser-Price, a Winston-Salem native, center, poses with her parents Mr. and Mrs. C.B. Hauser.