

Son studies abroad; daughter passes bar; Mom made it possible

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

On Sept. 24, Helena Hairston Ford, along with her family and friends, shed tears of joy as she watched her only daughter, a newly licensed attorney, get sworn in to the state and federal courts of North Carolina. On Sept. 25, Helena again shed tears of joy as she sent her only son to England to study.

Now the family reflects on the present and past accomplishments with pride, joy and humbleness. However, when you ask Tonya Lynette and James DeLano Ford how they have accomplished such high goals they are quick to acknowledge divine intervention as the source of all their dreams, with their mother coming in a close second.

"When I get discouraged, tired and lose faith, I just think of my mother and all that she has instilled in me and I know that I can't let her down," said Tonya Ford.

James DeLano Ford, "a world traveler" you may call him, has been around the world and back and is not stopping. He graduated from Carver High School in 1997 and is now a junior at Morehouse College in Atlanta with a major in business, concentration in finance and minor in Spanish.

DeLano is showing the world what he has to offer. He recently

spent half of his summer studying Spanish in Dominican Republic. His experiences included becoming bilingual in Spanish, residing with a Dominican Republic family and traveling extensively throughout that part of the world.

Upon his return to Winston-Salem DeLano became a summer associate in the finance and treasury department of Wachovia Corp. And now he is off again, this time to England to study at Lancaster University. He is taking classes that will serve as a substitute for his fall semester at Morehouse College. DeLano will reside in a campus dormitory, have an adoptive family take care of him while he is away, and meet a host of people from different countries. His travel plans throughout the semester include exploring London; Paris; Madrid, Spain; Switzerland; and Johannesburg, South Africa.

DeLano's family misses him but is proud of his accomplishments.

"He's my role model," said his older sister, Tonya.

Tonya Ford is a 1992 honors graduate of Carver High School and a 1996 honors graduate of Hampton University. She pursued her law degree at N.C. University School of Law in Durham.

While at NCCU Law, she was more than a law student. She served

as the president of her class for two consecutive years, vice president of the Black Law Student Association at NCCU, member of the executive board of the National Black Law Student Association, trial advocacy member and student recruiter for the law school. She was also recognized in Who's Who Among America's Law Students for three consecutive years and won the 1999 Student of the Year award.

Tonya served as a summer associate for several well-known attorneys. She was a law clerk for Hazel Mack and Lennard Tucker, two local attorneys. She also clerked for attorney Willie Gary of Stuart, Fla.

On May 8, 1999, Tonya successfully completed her stay at NCCU, presenting the charge to the class at the commencement exercises. After graduation she began a new phase of her life, preparing for the N.C. bar exam. Throughout the summer Tonya did practically nothing but study.

"I thought law school was hard," said Tonya. "The bar was something I had never experienced before. For six weeks my day consisted of studying from 6 a.m.-midnight with four breaks and an hour dinner ... and talking to my mom and brother of course."

However, it all paid off because on Aug. 23 she was notified that she had passed.

"I am ecstatic yet humble, because some didn't pass and that could have been me," said Tonya, who now practices with a firm in Raleigh. She plans to take the Florida bar exam in February.

"Phenomenal Woman" was the theme of Helena Ford's surprise 50th birthday dinner party, hosted by her two children at the Adam's Mark Hotel.

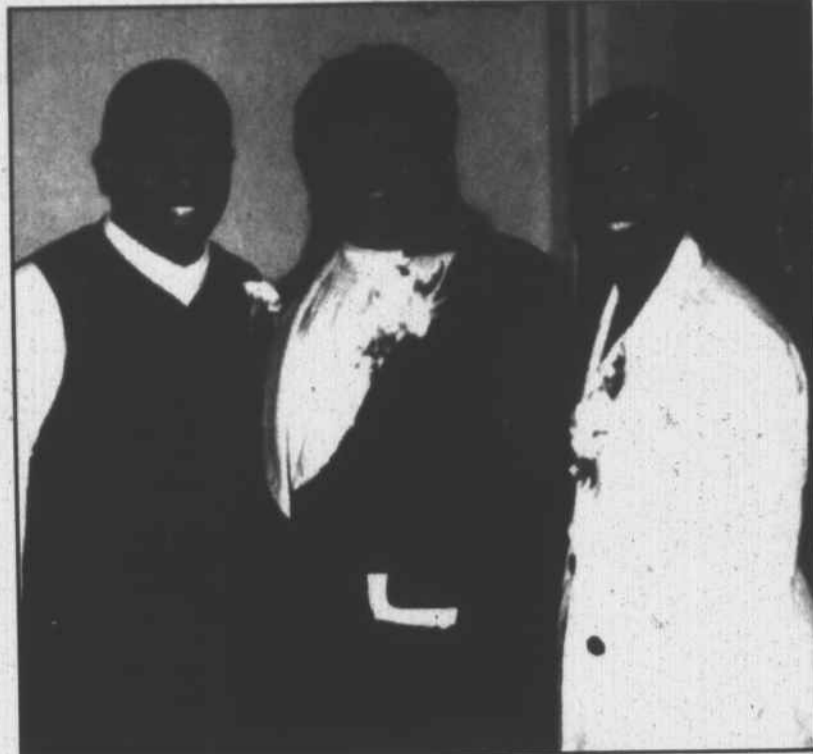
"She is nothing but phenomenal," said Tonya. "Neither my accomplishments nor DeLano's could have taken place without her. So many people tell her how proud she should be of us; however, we applaud her and are extremely proud of her."

Tonya and DeLano invited some of Helena's closest friends and relatives (missing a few, they admit) to the birthday party. Helena's surprise showed on her face throughout the evening. Helena was presented with a video of every phase of her life. Everyone thanked her for being a great mother, friend, sister, daughter and for being phenomenal.

"That was something that I will never forget," said a tearful Helena.

Earlier this year the family lost a close and dear relative, their mother and grandmother, Mary Hairston, known to many as MayMay.

Tonya said, "It has been difficult to experience so much success with-



DeLano and Tonya Ford pose with their mother, Helena Ford, as they celebrate her birthday by saying thank you for being a phenomenal woman.

out having MayMay here to celebrate. I would have given anything to have my grandmother at my swearing-in. However, I know she had a front-row seat and she has told all of her heavenly friends

about our accomplishments. "That's just how she was, always proud."

"She has every right to be proud, because this is a family that exemplifies what hard work, faith, love and prayer can produce."

UNITY reclaims community: 30 youths participate in Big Sweep

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Thirty energetic and involved youths from local neighborhoods participated in Big Sweep, a national activity that cleans waterways and streams, on Sept. 19 at Bowen Park Par Course.

Their participation demonstrates their commitment to making a difference in their neighborhoods. This commitment has been developed over the time that United Neighbors Involved in Transforming Youth (UNITY) has been working to transform youths and to give them a reason to give back to their community and make it a place where they can be proud of living.

UNITY was established in January 1997 to increase community leadership and membership in three neighborhood associations, improve community appearance, maintain a safe and drug-free environment in the neighborhoods and involve residents in positive activities.

In UNITY's almost three years in existence, major progress has been made, according to association leaders Mary Moore (president) and Dorothy Bonner (vice president). Quiet days and nights have replaced drug activities, loitering and drunken conflicts. Youths in the neighborhoods have experienced community service and a sense of what it's like to live in a drug-free environment. Apathy has been replaced with pride and a caring about what happens in the community and the people who live there.

UNITY, Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods, the Winston-Salem Foundation, the Winston-Salem Police Department, City Neighborhood Housing Services, Praise Assembly Church, Center Grove Church in Clemmons and many businesses have contributed to the success in these neighborhoods. A few neighborhood leaders have made a difference through their tireless efforts in working with neighborhood youths in various types of activities. These leaders represent three neighborhood associations: LaDeara Crest Tenant Association, Bowen Park Community Club and the East 25th Street Take Back Our Neighborhood Association. These neighborhoods have united together to reclaim their neighborhoods.

During a recent community day and neighborhood reunion, Winston Salem State University band, cheerleaders, football team and basketball team came into the neighborhood to perform and give their support to the community. The city "showmobile" was stationed at the park, with Mr. Bill's Production pro-

viding music and entertainment. More than 200 residents attended and enjoyed hot dogs, potato chips, lemonade and entertainment by "Busta Brown" of 102 Jams.

UNITY received a grant from Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods, a nonprofit organization that provides grants to neighborhoods to assist in revitalization, crime and drug prevention efforts. This was the second such event for UNITY,

which hopes to hold the community day biannually.

Over the past three years the neighborhood association has been working in the three neighborhoods to involve youths in beautification projects and other activities such as block-to-block clean-ups, community gardens and small painting and carpentry projects.

In July of this year, through a \$4,350 grant from the Winston-

Salem Foundation, neighborhood youths participated in a beautification project that built ramps, and painted houses for the senior citizens in the neighborhood. The youths participated with City Changers, a youth group from Center Grove Baptist Church in Clemmons that provides community services to neighborhoods in East Winston.

The goal of this project was to encourage youths to be involved in

positive activities that give them a sense of community service and that add to the quality of life for all neighborhood residents. This activity helped to improve race relations by bringing youths together from different races to work together for the good of neighborhood residents.

UNITY's goals and objectives for transforming the youths of the community ensure not only the future of these neighborhoods but

also the future of any neighborhood where they may choose to live. The goal is to help them become productive and contributing members of society by first becoming productive and contributing youths.

Dorothy Bonner said, "The saying 'The youth are our future' may be overused but it is forever true. We must plan for our future by training our youth."

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A youth retrieves articles from Bowen Park Stream.