

# COMMUNITY FOCUS

SECTION C

Winston-Salem Greensboro High Point

The Choice for African-American News

JULY 5, 2001

## “Live on Liberty” - not just another party



### Community Calendar

#### Big Clean Up

The Residents Council of LaDeara Crest Estates will have its first monthly community clean sweep Saturday, from 9 to 11 a.m. Residents will be asked to clean their common areas and breezeways during the event. Volunteers are welcome as well. The N.C. Cooperative Extension will provide gloves, bags, safety vests and other cleaning material. Residents and volunteers are asked to meet at the Naomi Jones Resource Center, which is located within the community.

#### Experience sports

The African American Society of High Point will sponsor a forum on the black experience in sports on Monday, July 16. The forum is titled, Sports: The black experience, yesterday and today. It will take place at the Washington Terrace Community Center in High Point beginning at 6:30 p.m. It is scheduled to end around 8:30 p.m. For more information, call Rufus Bostic at 336-882-1563.

#### Kids' Explosion

The Mount Sinai Full Gospel Deliverance Center, located at 2721 Manchester St., will host its annual Kids' Implosion for youngsters 5 to 13 on July 20-21. The event will feature the Rev. Gertrude Toomer of Lumberton and food, games, music workshops and step show. For registration or for more info, call 336-722-2624 or 336-764-0411.

#### Fans available

Beat the summer heat with Project Fan, courtesy of The Duke Energy Foundation and the Area Agency on Aging. Fans are available at no cost at the Winston-Salem Urban League, 201 W. fifth Street (Trade Street entrance), Monday-Friday 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., beginning June 15. Requirements: valid identification, 60+ years of age, resident of Forsyth County and served by Duke Energy, have an existing home situation that presents a threat to the person's health and well-being, only one fan per household. For information, call (336) 725-5614 and speak with Adell Marlin, director-senior center, ext. 1305, or Rev. Ben Moseley, outreach coordinator, ext. 1401.

#### Registration set for library's summer programs

“Books for Seekers and Dreamers” is the theme of the High Point Public Library's seven-week summer reading program, which will transport young people to various places through story times, special events and a book club. Registration for the book club began June 4, and kids can sign up through the month of July to participate. The book club members will earn prizes based on the number of books they read.

For more information about summer programs at the High Point Public Library, stop by the Children's Room on the first floor, 901 N. Main Street, or call 883-3666.



Officers of BBCA include (left to right) Treasurer Jerome Gadson, Asst. treasurer Norvell McDowell (seated), President Johnnie Blue Gardner, Vice President Reginald Lorell and Hashim Saleh.



Lolan West and Keith Grant order hot dogs from Barbara Lynch and Tracy Washington of G&S Cleaning Service.



Jerome Gadson, owner of The Golden Stag Lounge, and treasurer of BBCA, markets t-shirts and caps at “Live on Liberty.”



Bill Boyd of B&D's Chicago Style Ribs and Chicken makes a sell to shoppers Barbara Lynch and David Moore.



Norvell “Pops” McDowell and his partner Eddie Simmons own Odessey Hip Hop Clothing store on Liberty Street.

### Black Business/Cultural Association brings the Liberty Street neighbors together

BY FELECIA P. McMILLAN  
COMMUNITY CORRESPONDENT

The officers of the Black Business/Cultural Association of Winston-Salem (BBCA) have plans for Liberty Street and the surrounding community. Saturday, June 30 marked the first day of the Black Farmer's Market and Vendors Mart located on the property between The Golden Stag Lounge and Gilmore's Funeral Home. Each Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon, they will continue to have the Farmer's Market, and from noon until 7 p.m. they will have live entertainment, soul food, and the products and services of local vendors showcased in the area.

According to the group's president, Johnnie Blue Gardner, the mission of “Live on Liberty” is “to uplift the black community economically, politically, socially, and culturally.” The motto of the organization is “Community and Businesses Working Together In Pride To Make Difference.” Gardner expressed his vision for the success of the effort.

“Live on Liberty is about the community. It is not about any individual. We need all of your support so we can make the community as viable as any other community,” said Gardner. “Live on Liberty is not just a big party. It is not just a street scene. Like Tom Joyner says, ‘This is a party with a purpose.’”

Based on Gardner's research, in 1999 the African Americans in Forsyth County supported a buying power of \$1.3 billion annually. BBCA hopes to funnel some of these dollars back into the black community. They are looking for more business owners, vendors and members to get involved. They meet each Wednesday night at 7:00 at Gilmore Funeral Home.

“We cannot continue to spend 95 cents of every dollar in the white community or somebody else's community. We will not survive,” said Gardner. “This is our maiden voyage, but we plan to continue these efforts every Saturday on Liberty Street. We know that the City plans to create an airport park in this area, but we have plans also for this area.”

Historically, Liberty Street was one of the streets in Winston-Salem that had a small concentration of black businesses. Vice President Reginald Lorell, the owner of Lorell's Signs on Liberty Street since 1967, is pleased to see some energy put into improving the Liberty Street and making it more visible.

“I have been on Liberty Street for 34 years. I have made it through some tough times. Quite naturally, I want to see the community improve,” said Lorell. “We have a lot to be proud of.”

Jerry Gilmore of Gilmore's Funeral Home is also a member of BBCA. Although the funeral home has been in existence for 53 years, it has been on Liberty Street since 1962. Gilmore has high hopes for the success of this venture.

“Live on Liberty offers us a sense of community. It is business people working together to enhance the community. It is important for the viability of the Liberty Street community that we do things to enhance our business,” said Gilmore. Historically, Liberty Street has been a mainstay for black businesses and for the historic black community. It is good for us to have a who-ness and where-ness.”

Gilmore supports the vision of the organization by providing meeting space and the land for the market.

“This is an excellent start. However, progress in its infancy is always a target for criticism. It is time for people to think about what we need to do,” said Gilmore. “It's not all about the vendors and the shoppers. It is about a new attitude, a new mindset. It is just good to believe in us.”

Treasurer Jerome Gadson, owner of The Golden Stag Lounge, applauds the BBCA for having the foresight to bring “Live on Liberty” to the community.

“Our people won't have to go out of the community to get their fresh vegetables. It helps people become more successful with their business of growing crops,” said Gadson. “It is also a benefit to families because the farmer's market promotes nutrition.”

Farmer Vern Switzer, 55, of Farmer Vern's Produce set up shop with his brothers William Switzer, 57, and Joe Pettaway, 67. They sold watermelon, corn, tomatoes, cantaloupe, squash, onions, beans and other vegetables. The sign on their truck reads, “Thank You For Help Saving The Small Black Farmer.” Together they cultivate 30 acres in Germantown. The motto of their business is “I Walk By Faith.” The Rev. Vern Switzer is grateful to God for the opportunity to participate in the Black Farmer's Market.

“I hope I can be more help to the market. I want to give black people a chance to buy black owned and black grown farm produce,” said Switzer. “I want to open up their awareness that there is only one black certified produce farmer in this area and that's me. I have been certified by the state of North Carolina Farm Extension Agency.”

Switzer observes that African American farming is a dying art.

“Black farming is just about over. The youngest black farmer is probably 40 years old, and that's pitiful. When you have to look at the white man for everything you eat, that's pitiful,” said Switzer. “I can remember when at least 18 out of every 20 families in Winston-Salem had a garden. Now only 2 out of that 20 have a garden.”

Switzer is grateful to New Jerusalem Baptist Church and his own church Red Band Baptist Church for supporting him over the years. When they have their annual picnics and church gatherings, they contact Farmer Vern's Produce for watermelons and vegetables. He delivers them to private homes and organizations. Helping with the Farmer's Market will give him more visibility to the community.

“Some African Americans may not know about my fresh produce, but I want them to know,” said Switzer.

Hashim Saleh of the Otesha Creative Arts Ensemble wants to encourage economic empowerment for African American farmers.

“We want to bring the black farmers up here each Saturday morning. All of our money is going to the Coliseum and to the Sandy Ridge Road market. We need to bring economics back to the black community. If our Latino brothers and sisters can do on the South Side, we can do it on the East Side,” said Saleh. “There is a marketplace everywhere you go in the world—to the Caribbean, South Africa, wherever. We hope the community will come out and support this market.”

Assistant Treasurer Norvell “Pops” McDowell, and his partner Eddie Simmons own Odessey, a retail store for men's and women's hip hop fashions. The store has been on Liberty Street for a year. It was formerly called the City Slickers. Simmons can remember when Liberty Street was a central thoroughfare for African Americans. He recalls such historical hangouts as the Imperial Barber Shop, The Dungeon Club, and Momma Chris Soul Food.

“This used to be a bright business area. Black businesses survived right here in this area, but because of recent incidents, many have given the street a bad name. We should be proud of Liberty Street.”

See “Live on Liberty” on C2

All photos by Felecia P. McMillan