

# Juneteenth celebration to be held at Rupert Bell Park

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Fourth Annual Juneteenth/Stone Soul Picnic will be held on Saturday, June 15, at Rupert Bell Park from noon until 6 p.m. Billed as a "Family Picnic in the Park," the Juneteenth/Stone Soul Picnic promises to have something for everyone. Softball, basketball, horseshoe, and double-dutch tournaments will begin 10 a.m. for youths and adults. Bingo and checkers tournaments will be held in the Rupert Bell Recreation Center for senior citizens. Also featured will be free kiddie rides and amusements, food and craft vendors.

All day entertainment on main stage will feature the Otesha Ensemble, Boss Drummers, Piney Grove Step Team, Janice Price Dance Group, Samuel

Obie, Envision, Gospel Spirit and much more.

Members of the planning committee of the Fourth Annual Juneteenth/Stone Soul Picnic represent R&R Productions, WQMG 97.1 FM Radio, Entcom Communications, Winston-Salem Recreation & Parks Department, Winston Lake Family YMCA, Winston-Salem Urban League and East Winston Community Development Corp.

Juneteenth the oldest African-American holiday, is a celebration of freedom. Juneteenth, celebrated on June 19, is the name given to Emancipation Day by African-Americans in Texas.

On that day in 1865 Union Major General Gordon Granger read General Order #3 to the people of Galveston. It stated, "The people of Texas are informed

that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free."

Large celebrations on June 19 began in 1866 and continued regularly into the early 20th century.

The African-Americans treated this day like the Fourth of July. In the early days, the celebration included a prayer service, speakers with inspirational messages, reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, games, food and much more.

The Juneteenth celebration in Winston-Salem was organized by the Winston-Salem City-Wide Kwanzaa Committee in 1999. Made up of several community organizations and individuals, the committee is dedicated to educating their community about African-American celebrations and customs.



Members of the Otesha Creative Dance Ensemble are scheduled to be among the entertainment for this week's picnic.

## Caucus

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sensation Eve Cornelius. Avent-Hurst says this year's forum topics are more relevant than ever.

"It is really an event unlike any other," she said. "We have something for everyone."

The Winston-Salem connection will become apparent on the second day of the conference. During a banquet that day, Carl Matthews, a city resident who organized the state's first successful sit-in, will receive the Trailblazer Award, the highest award the Black Legislative Caucus gives. In 1960, Matthews led several Wake Forest University and Winston-Salem State University students in sit-ins at several lunch counters at Winston-Salem five and dime stores. Although the sit-ins occurred after the one by the Greensboro Four, the sit-in was the first to end in the banning of segregation at downtown lunch counters in Winston-Salem.

"I suggested ... we honor Mr. Matthews, and everyone thought it was high time for him to receive this honor," Womble said.

Ben Ruffin, another Forsyth County resident, will serve as the keynote speaker at the banquet. Ruffin is the chairman of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors.

As usual, several scholarships will be handed out to teens during



Carl Matthews, second from right, stands with other sit-in participants at a recent ceremony in Winston-Salem.

the weekend. The educational component draws lots of young people from across the state. For the past several years, the Winston-Salem branch of the NAACP has taken a van-load of young

people to the conference. A comedian and fashion show have been added this year to pique the interest of the younger crowd.

While the weekend promises to be festive, it will also have an

undercurrent of sadness. Sen. Luther Jordan, the chairman of the Legislative Black Caucus, died earlier this year. He will be formally honored during the event. Legislators have also decided to

dedicate the entire conference in memory of Jordan.

The Legislative Education & Scholarship Weekend Conference will be held June 21 and June 22

in Raleigh at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel and Conference Center. Registration is available on site. The cost is \$45 for one day and \$90 for both days. For more information, call (919) 829-7017.

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