

Paul Donohoe looks over the shoulder of his "little brother," T.J. Hood, as T.J. works on the computer in Donohoe's office.

Kids are sometimes waiting years for Big Brother/Sister

Most on waiting list are African-American

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

Paul Donohoe, 30, has pictures of his little brother, T.J. Hood, 11, on his desk at work. The two aren't biologically related but have been friends for the last four years thanks to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Forsyth County.

For years Donohoe considered volunteering with the program, but he never felt he had enough time to commit to it. A television commercial seeking volunteers prompted Donohoe to finally sign up.

"I remember seeing an advertisement on TV a long time ago for mentors," said Donohoe. "I thought the commitment was much greater than what it really was."

Despite his job as president of a local marketing firm, Quest Companies Inc., Donohoe manages to make time to attend school functions and meetings at Kernersville Middle School, where Hood is a sixth-grader.

"I do get involved. It's something that I know a lot of big brothers or big sisters need to do, but he lets me get involved so I do, as much as I possibly can," said Donohoe.

Hood enjoys playing video games and sports. He said he wanted a big brother because he was lonely.

"He's fun to go out with. I like to play video games with him. He helps me with my homework," said Hood.

Donohoe said a change in Hood since the two met is evident to him and to Hood's teachers. Like any big brother, Donohoe dotes on his little brother's athletic skills too.

"He does well in school, he works hard, and he does well in sports. He's on the All-Star team in basketball and he plays football."

Nearly five years ago, Donohoe was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). He said his unexpected illness motivated him to get involved in the community. He experiences minimal symptoms and now has the disease under control thanks to medication. He's also a volunteer at Samaritan Ministries and with the Central North Carolina Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Hood hangs out at the office with Donohoe sometimes, and the two friends enjoy adventurous outings like trips to the mountains, the zoo or playing golf. According to Donohoe, Hood's golf swing is pretty good.



"We do a lot of fun stuff. He helped me decorate the Christmas tree. His family is great: They let him come over to my house," said Donohoe. "We have just as much fun

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— Bert Grisard, president BBBS

going to the library as we do at Wake (Forest University) game."

Hood's grandmother, Mary Gass, thanks God for Donohoe's involvement in her grandson's life. She describes him as being a thoughtful person who rarely breaks a date with Hood.

"(Donohoe) has gone all out of his duties as a big brother. I want to thank his lovely parents who have accepted T.J. and love him as Paul does," said Gass.

Hood was on the waiting list for a big brother for two years before being matched up with Donohoe. Bert Grisard, president of BBBS, said there are a hundred kids like Hood,

the majority of them African-American, on the waiting list today.

"We don't care about matching people up by race. But there's a need for more African-American volunteers and white volunteers," said Grisard, adding that there is also a need for more male volunteers.

According to Grisard, mentors must agree to spend a few hours each week with their little brother or sister for at least a year. He said the majority of mentors stay in touch with their mentees beyond the one-year obligation.

"I can't tell you how many little brothers and sisters have been in their big brothers' and sisters' weddings. You don't sign up as a volunteer for a lifelong commitment, but they often turn into that," said Grisard.

He doesn't spend time with Hood to make himself feel better, said Donohoe, but he does it because he knows that kids like Hood need someone to spend time with.

"We're not just buddies anymore. We do a lot of good stuff that won't just fade away," said Donohoe. "He's a great kid. I've always wanted to be an older brother since I'm the youngest. You definitely can make a difference pretty quickly."

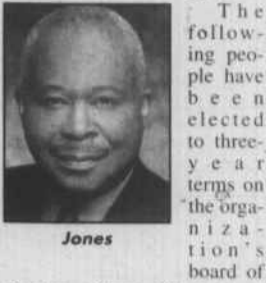
For information on volunteer opportunities at Big Brothers Big Sisters, call 724-7993.

News Clips

Compiled from staff, wire and submitted reports

DWSP elects new members, officers

The Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership has elected new board members and officers.



Jones

The following people have been elected to three-year terms on the organization's board of directors: Gena Knighten of Chelsee's Coffee Shop & More; David Gall of David E. Gall, AIA, architect; Marcus Schaefer of Truliant Federal Credit Union; Rence Callahan of Walter Robbs Callahan & Pierce; and Miriam McCarter of Special Occasions. McCarter is also the head of the Winston-Salem Black Chamber of Commerce.

The following people were elected board officers: Steve Snelgrove

was elected chairman; Lafayette Jones was elected vice chairman; Robert McCoy is secretary; and Steve Wiggs is treasurer.

The Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership is a membership organization dedicated to making the center city a destination by creating a core of vibrant, intense mixed uses in a pedestrian-friendly environment with emphasis on major employment centers,

restaurants, retail, entertainment and residential uses.

YMCA of Northwest North Carolina is new name for a growing association

The 115-year-old YMCA of Greater Winston-Salem will have a new name in 2004 to reflect its expansion into adjoining counties. The new name is YMCA of Northwest North Carolina.

Since adopting the former name 20 years ago, the YMCA has expanded its services in Forsyth, Stokes, Davie, Yadkin and Wilkes counties and now has 11 branches serving these areas.

"The new name better describes who we are and who we serve," said Tom Looby, president and chief executive officer. "It also allows for continued growth in the region should other communities desire the services of the YMCA. Although our name is changing, our mission remains the same: to help people reach their God-given potential in spirit, mind and body."

Looby said administrative offices will remain in Winston-Salem.

Jigsaw puzzle artist featured at SECCA

The Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art will feature a rare museum exhibition of the work of Houston-based artist Al Souza from Jan. 24 through April 3. The exhibit, Al Souza: Inverse Warp Field, features a series of paintings using commercially manufactured jigsaw puzzles and cut paper works from a range of source material, including atlas pages, sheet music, and weather charts.

For the past several years, Souza has created visually stunning paintings swirling with vibrant, colorful images. These paintings don't use paint in the traditional sense; instead, the artist skillfully arranges large, found portions of jigsaw puzzle pieces scavenged from thrift stores and garage sales.

Before becoming an artist in the 1960s, Souza trained as an aeronautical engineer and

spent some time designing helicopters.

An opening reception for the exhibit will be Jan. 23 from 7-9 p.m. Souza will give an artist talk at 6 p.m., prior to the reception. The reception and ArtTalk are free for SECCA members, \$5 for non-members. For more information, call SECCA at 725-1904 or visit www.secca.org.

Hal Atkinson, M.D., receives career award

Hal Atkinson, M.D., of Winston-Salem, an instructor in gerontology at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, has received the Geriatric Academic Career Award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Atkinson will receive five years of support to develop his career as an academic geriatrician.



Atkinson

The purpose of the award is to promote the careers of academic geriatricians who emphasize teaching. Despite the rapid aging of the population, there is a critical shortage in fellowship-trained geriatricians to lead educational efforts in academic medical centers throughout the United States.

Atkinson will develop programs to enhance Medical Center geriatric education programs for medical students, residents and interdisciplinary teams. He also will pursue a master's degree in clinical epidemiology to further develop skills in clinical research and in the interpretation of geriatric research findings for medical education programs.

He earned his medical degree from Medical University of South Carolina and completed residency and fellowship training at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center. He is board-certified in internal medicine and geriatric medicine.

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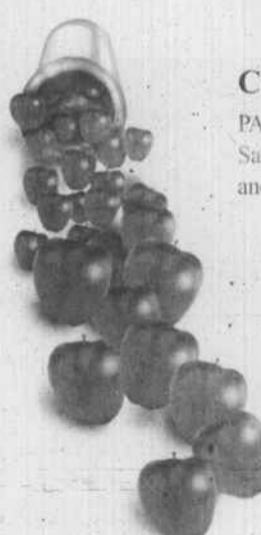
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