

Aggie professionals work to empower youth

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

At 25, Jamerus Payton has barely gotten his feet planted as an engineer in Dallas, Texas. Yet he and fellow North Carolina A&T alumnus Torrence Reed say it's high time they gave back to the community where they began their higher educational journeys.

The two men founded the Greensboro-based Standing Tall for Success (STFS), earlier this year.

The organization, which targets at-risk youth ages 8-18 in Greensboro and across the state of North Carolina, already has one basketball charity event under its belt and recently achieved status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Though most of its initiatives are still in their infancy, Payton says STFS will serve

underserved youth, particularly those hailing from single parent households.

"We ... grew up in single parent homes," Payton said of the motivation to start STFS. "We ... had our obstacles, but we all had this drive for success - we wanted to do well."

The program will focus on educational, personal, business and recreational components. Organizers hope to find occasion to partner with other groups in their target area that share their passion for youth, Payton says. In addition, Payton, Reed and the handful of college buddies who help they have enlisted for the project will serve as mentors for the youth.

"Kids from single parent homes traditionally don't do as well as those from a two parent home," Payton commented. "We felt it was our obligation to give back."



The family of Sean Murphy thanks the crowd at last year's basketball event. Torrence Reed is second from the left.

The first major event for STFS was the Sean Murphy Charity Classic basketball game, held at their alma mater last June. The event was named for Payton and Reed's

friend, who died during an intramural basketball game in 2004 as the result of a heart condition. An engineering major at A&T, Murphy was an avid basketball player with a

philanthropic spirit, the men say.

"When Sean died, I always wanted to form a foundation in his name ... He loved basketball (and) he would always help someone before he helped himself," recalled Reed, now a grad student at A&T. "He was always ... full throttle and that's the same way we are with our (fundraising) efforts."

A portion of the profits from the game were donated to the American Heart Association in his honor.

"So many people are touched by so many different forms of cardiovascular disease. We want to educate more individuals about it," said Reed. "We thought, 'what better way to do it than by entertaining people at the same time?'"

STMS is currently gearing up for the next Sean Murphy Classic, slated for April 3,

2009. Like its predecessor, the 2009 event will benefit the American Heart Association, and Reed says they expect a much bigger turnout at A&T's Corbett Sports Center this time around.

"We were six 25 year-olds talking about how we wanted to start a nonprofit; people wanted to see if we were serious about it," Payton said. "Once they saw everything was smooth sailing, now they're starting to get involved."

Standing Tall organizers are asking for the support of the community for the Sean Murphy Charity Classic. Sponsorship and monetary support are needed, as are players. For more information about the organization or the charity classic, call (336) 542-5961 or visit www.standtall4success.org.

Home

from page A1

annual reunion, held Sept. 20, has become an occasion for reflection and renewal for the men who exorcized their demons within the home's walls and went out into the world to start anew. For current residents staying at the home, the reunion is a time to see all the things that are possible through faith, devotion and the gift of brotherhood.

Last year, Walter Gray was in the latter category. He returned to the reunion this year as a recent alumnus. Sixteen months ago, he left the Home after completing the stringent treatment program, which includes regular 12-step meetings, curfews and mandatory outside employment.

"My life has just been blessed," Gray said. He works for himself as a general contractor and jobs have been steady. It is a lucrative trade that Gray learned long ago, but his battles with drugs never allowed him to put them to use for very long. Gray says he doesn't think about falling off the wagon. The Fellowship Home provides him with a constant support system and the tools that he believes will keep the



Some of the many successful alumni of The Fellowship Home.

Photo by Kevin Walker

blessings coming.

Executive Director Thom Elmore says the men can always come home again, and not just in times of trouble. Elmore encourages alumni like Gray to drop in every now and then to visit with current residents.

"They need to see people who have been where they are and have moved on. Then they can see what they are working toward," said

Elmore.

The daylong reunion was packed with events and meetings. Successful alums and longtime supporters of the agency were feted during an awards ceremony; and chicken, burgers and hot dogs flowed freely from the grill to plates. The only somber moment came when attendees honored deceased alumni during a candlelight ceremony.

Though it has been a United Way partner since the 1980s, The Fellowship Home is not immune to these difficult financial times. The Kate

B. Reynolds Foundation recently awarded the agency a grant to provide transitional housing for alumni who have completed the program but don't have the means to find homes of their own.

The grant allows The Fellowship Home to provide several furnished apartments to alumni who qualify. The apartments chosen for the project happen to be right next door to The Fellowship Home in the city's West End. Elmore said the close proximity is an effort to save staffers who must visit outside clients regularly from excessive travel and save the agency from paying for \$4 a gallon gas.

But having alumni who are trying to prove that they can make it on their own so close does have its cons, Elmore concedes, since it can be argued that they are still within the agency's protective arms.

"It is a double-edged sword," said Elmore.

David T. and Brad S. (initial-only last names are com-

monplace in treatment programs to maintain anonymity) stand on each side of that sword.

David T. left The Fellowship in April and moved next door into one of the apartments. He feels that his apartment is not an extension of the home.

"I feel like I am on my own," he said. "I was really looking forward to the day when I could be out there on my own. It was time for me to grow up."

Brad S., who has struggled with substance abuse for much of his life, is comforted by knowing that the Home is just a few steps away from his apartment.

"I spent 27 years trying to change my life," he said. "The Fellowship Home has helped me live for the first time. They had faith in me until I eventually began to have faith in myself."

For more information about The Fellowship Home, go to www.thefellowshiphome.org.

Drinks

from page A7

tent found in other AEDs," the attorneys general state.

Their concerns were strong enough that MillerCoors has delayed the Oct. 1 debut of Sparks Red until talks with attorneys general are conducted.

O'Brien's study, "Caffeinated Cocktails: Energy Drink Consumption, High-risk Drinking and Alcohol-related Consequences Among College Students," was published in Academic Emergency Medicine earlier this year.

In it, she stated that college students who reported consuming alcohol mixed with energy drinks had significantly higher prevalence of alcohol-related consequences such as sexual



Miller already has some versions of the drink for sale.

assault and injury.

O'Brien is in agreement with the attorneys general.

"In answer to the attorneys general, and in the interest of responsible beverage service, I call on Miller to reconsider the introduction of Sparks Red," she said.

Alcohol energy drinks taste and look like non-alcoholic energy drinks. O'Brien said they are popular with young people, who often

believe, incorrectly, that the caffeine in the drinks will counteract the intoxicating effects of the alcohol.

In June Anheuser-Busch agreed to stop making alcohol drinks containing caffeine or other stimulants following legal action by attorneys general of 10 states. Anheuser-Busch also agreed to reformulate Tilt and Bud Extra, two popular alcohol energy drinks.

Seeing THE City Sloan's New York

October 1, 2008 - January 4, 2009

EXHIBITION OPENING PARTY

Friday, October 3, 7-9 p.m. \$5 members/students free

REYNOLDA HOUSE MUSEUM of AMERICAN ART

530 REYNOLDA ROAD, WINSTON-SALEM, NC

703.785.3611 REYNOLDAHOUSE.ORG



Lighting Up the Millennium:
A Spectacular Light Exhibit
Millennium Center, Winston-Salem
Presented by the University of
North Carolina School of the Arts
Evenings of November 13-15, 2008

Piedmont Craftsmen's Fair
Benton Convention Center, Winston-Salem
November 15-16, 2008

Light in the Piazza
Piedmont Opera
October 10, 12, and 14, 2008

Structure, Surface and Expression:
Quilt Directions Today
Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art
September 13, 2008-January 4, 2009

Seeing the City: Sloan's New York
The Reynolda House Museum of American Art
October 4, 2008-January 4, 2009

EXPERIENCE WINSTON-SALEM
where the arts come alive

Go to TheCityOfTheArts.com and click on Weekends in Winston for information on arts, dance, music, theater, family, and living history experiences in our City of the Arts.