



Officers adorn a memorial wreath during the ceremony.

Photos by Layla Farmer

# Solemn ceremony honors officers who died serving

BY LAYLA FARMER  
THE CHRONICLE

The parking lot of Pinedale Christian Church in Winston-Salem was littered with squad cars of every variety Thursday evening, as law enforcement officers from across the county gathered to honor their fallen comrades.

Inside, family members of those who were lost in the line of duty donned blue and black ribbons and waited in the wings, as a solemn procession of uniformed officers made its way into the sanctuary, badges covered with black strips to symbolize their mourning. A few smiled. Some wiped tears from their eyes; most just stared straight ahead with unreadable expressions.

The erie wail of bagpipes greeted the families as a deputy in a dark hat escorted them in. A pair of uniformed officers marched stiffly down the aisle, placing a memorial wreath at the head of the room. "I am always so humbled when I come here to see so many of, for lack of a better word, my own kind, here," commented keynote speaker Robert Digh, of the North Carolina State Highway Patrol, looking out over the sea of blue and brown uniforms. "You mean more to me than words can ever say."

The annual service, held in the midst of Law Enforcement Appreciation Week (May 10-16), has become a tradition for many in attendance.

Alma Lee Amos has only missed one service since 1995, when her grandson, Officer Stephen Amos II was killed in the line of duty. Amos said she attends "so people won't forget what all these officers did for them and all these officers are still doing for them."

Stephen Amos, 24, had been with the Winston-Salem Police Department just three years when he was shot while on a call in Hill Top Ridge Apartments.

"He was a good fella. He loved fishing; he loved his horse; he was just a good all-around country boy," his grandmother recalled.

Amos, who has several other family members in law enforcement, admits she was



Robert Digh



Alma Lee Amos

apprehensive when her grandson told her he was going to become a police officer, but says he was committed to the job.

"I had mixed feelings about it, but it was something he wanted to do ... to help other people," she related.

Like Amos, many officers feel inexplicably drawn to the work, Digh said.

"What we do and why we do it is because we are called," he commented. "...In the sense that it is a calling, it is heartfelt... you have the desire to help people and to be there for them."

Choosing the profession is in itself a heroic act, in Digh's estimation, and one that he believes should be commended.

"Being a hero is hard work, both mentally and physically,"



Officer McCoy

he said. "You're constantly trying to help those that can't help themselves in any number of ways."

Families of law enforcement officers play an important role as well, he noted, and he addressed those in the audience directly.

"People in the family of these officers, thank you for the support, the love and the grief that you've had to go through for what we do," he declared. "Thank you for realizing that our job is important."

Near the end of the service, a roll call of fallen officers was read. A bell tolled with the mention of each name, and an officer placed a rose in the memorial wreath. In all, 21 names were read. Then the sanctuary fell silent. A woman in the front row dabbed her eyes, crying quietly. It is always a poignant moment for Winston-Salem Police Officer Charles McCoy.

"A lot of people don't realize how touching it is for us to come to a service like this," he remarked, "because each and every day that we put our uniforms on, there's a chance that we're not going to come home."

Three Winston-Salem police officers have lost their lives in the line of duty since McCoy joined the force 16 years ago. Being able to honor their memories in such a tangible way is important to those who are still serving, McCoy said.

"You like to be in an environment where you can see the community come out and show support because we don't get a lot of thanks in what we do," he stated. "It means a lot."

## News Clips

Compiled from staff wire and submitted reports

### Childress Institute joins NASCAR charities

The Childress Institute for Pediatric Trauma at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center has been named to the NASCAR Foundation's Family of Charities, joining 31 other charitable organizations affiliated with drivers, race teams or tracks within the motor sports community.

"The Childress Institute is privileged to be a member of the NASCAR Foundation," said Richard Childress, president and CEO of Richard Childress Racing, who co-founded the Childress Institute with his wife, Judy, in 2008. "During our 40 years of racing, we have always been dedicated to the fans. Now we have the opportunity to give back by saving the lives of seriously injured children across the United States."

The Childress Institute's mission is to significantly improve survival rates of children nationwide who suffer serious injuries and reduce the lifelong impact of traumatic injuries in children. The Institute will focus on key areas in treatment, education, training, research and prevention of pediatric trauma. Its goal is to help lead the national search for ways to save the lives of severely injured children and help those who survive progress toward recovery and better quality of life.

### Virginia Tech to induct A&T's Murray into distinguished alumni group

Dr. Kenneth Murray, associate vice chancellor for academic affairs at North Carolina A&T State University, will be inducted into the Charles E.

Via Jr. Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering Academy of Distinguished Alumni at Virginia Tech University.

Distinguished alumni serve as examples to undergraduates, graduates and recent alumni as to the role they are expected to play in continuing support to the University, to the civil engineering profession and to society as a whole.

Murray received his bachelor's of science degree in 1965; his master's degree in 1967 and a doctorate degree in

civil engineering in 1968 from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). He is a registered professional engineer in North Carolina and has spent the last 35 years in academia as instructor to professor to chair to dean to associate vice chancellor. He also has over five years experience as a structural engineer in private practice. He holds the rank of professor of civil engineering at N.C. A&T. Murray has served in his position as associate vice-chancellor since 1986.

### Wellness Trust rolls out new Stroke Awareness Month campaign

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) has launched a new media campaign to coincide with the national health observance of May as Stroke Awareness Month. The campaign is the latest in a series of ads designed as part of HWTF's \$22 million Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative (HDI), a statewide effort which began in 2006.

The initiative includes grant awards to community-based projects that focus on reducing health disparities related to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer

among African-Americans, Latinos/Hispanics and American Indians across the state. Through HDI, HWTF also leads efforts to increase cultural competency among health care providers. While North Carolina's stroke death rate is on the decline, it remains the sixth highest in the nation; and stroke is the third leading cause of death in our state. African-Americans in our state have significantly higher stroke death rates than do whites, and they are more likely to die of stroke at younger ages than their white counterparts. Among African-American men, 35 percent of stroke deaths occur before age 65, compared with 15 percent among white men; 20 percent of stroke deaths among African-American women occur before age 65, compared with 7 percent among white women.

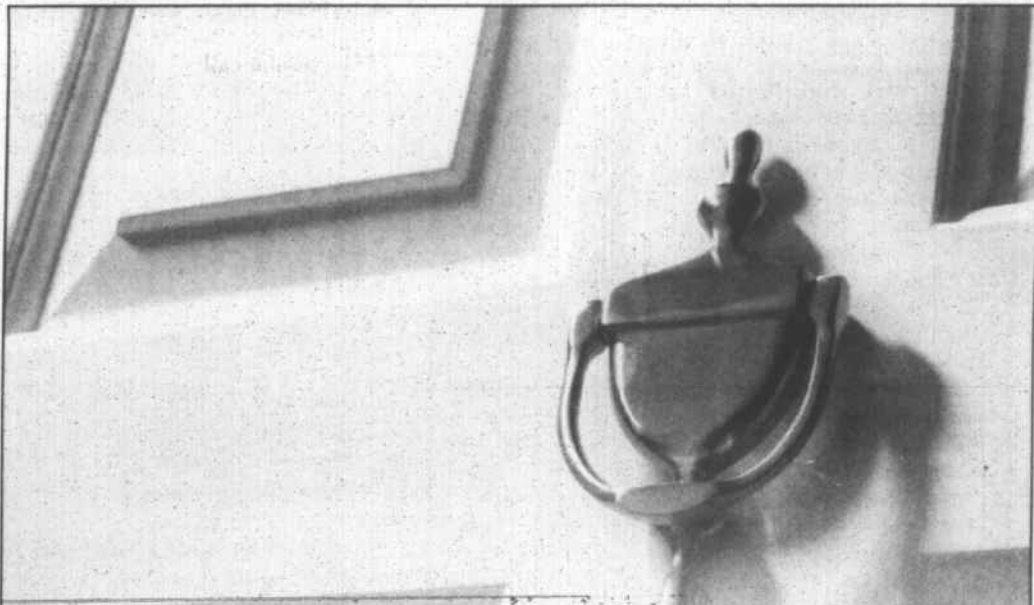
The campaign targets African-Americans because of the disparate rates of morbidity and mortality as a result of stroke.

### UNCG Beta Gamma Sigma chapter recognized

The Beta Gamma Sigma International Honor Society has recognized the chapter at the Bryan School of Business and Economics at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro as the top chapter for 2009.

The UNCG chapter earned the society's Gold Award for its excellence in programming and operations and superior level of membership acceptance. The honor was presented April 26 during the annual meeting and conference of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International in Orlando, Fla. Accepting was Pamela Cash, the Bryan School's assistant dean, who serves as chapter treasurer.

Membership in Beta Gamma Sigma is the highest recognition a business student can receive in a business program accredited by AACSB International.



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W-S Police Chief Scott Cunningham, from right, Sheriff Bill Schatzman and WSSU Police Chief Pat Norris take part in the ceremony.