



Slammers "Verbal Expression," "Donna Gun" and "Mustafa."

Photos by Layla Farmer

'SLAM' DUNK

Collaboration brings poetry back into local spotlight

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Every fourth Thursday of the month, poets and spoken word artists from across the city and beyond gather at Krankies Coffee on Third Street for a night of listening, sharing and friendly competition.

The Piedmont Slam began earlier this year and has quickly gained a loyal following. On some Thursdays, there have been close to 100 people in attendance; even a slow night draws about 50 fans.

The Slam is the result of a collaboration between two avid poets and Winston-Salem residents, Ismael Khatibu and Bob Moyer. The two met in the late '90s when both were members of a local poetry team.

Khatibu, who works as an office manager for the grassroots organization CHANGE (Communities Helping All Neighbors Gain Empowerment), is a lifelong lover of the written word. He spent time rapping before he moved to Winston-Salem a decade ago and discovered spoken word. He prides himself on writing socially-conscious pieces that provide commentary on the black experience in America.

"Coming from the background of being black and coming from the background of oral tradition, it was easy for me to just start transcribing things," related the Queens, NY-native. "I felt like I had a voice and the capacity to say different things that aren't generally said on a daily basis."

Moyer, who serves as the Artist-in-Residence at the Arts Based Elementary School, stumbled into poetry later in life and favors the haiku format.

Khatibu approached Moyer late last year and suggested that they work together to revive the city's spoken word scene, which at one-time was red-hot but had cooled in recent years.

"I think that we were able to utilize the strengths that we both have to bring it to the level that it is now," Khatibu said. "...it's been a wonderful experience for me. There isn't a time that I come here (to the competition) that somebody doesn't say something that makes me think."

A poetry slam is in essence a competition, but the winners aren't chosen solely on their literary prowess. Subject matter, delivery and their ability to touch the hearts and minds of listeners are also key aspects of the slam, as is the notion that competition breeds progress in all those who engage in it.

The Piedmont Slam consists of two components. The first half of the evening is an open mic event, where any and everyone is welcomed to take the stage and share their poetry or spoken word offerings. The second half is for elite poets. They



Founders Ismael Khatibu and Bob Moyer.

take to the stage for a battle of wits. At the end of the evening, only one can become victorious. A team of judges selected from the evening's audience rate each poet and the highest scorer wins the slam, and has the opportunity to compete in the Slam Off.

"One of the basic tenants of the poetry slam is it incorporates the audience," Khatibu explained. "They judge based upon their gut, how they feel about the poem."

Piedmont Slam is only one of three teams in North Carolina recognized by Poetry Slam Incorporated, the governing body that oversees the competitions. Top finishers in the slams make up teams of poets that travel to various regional and national competitions.

While sharing the love of poetry and elevating it as an artform is the ultimate goal of the Piedmont Slam, Khatibu and Moyer say the slams are designed to promote harmony and understanding among people from a variety of backgrounds.

"My goal was always to try to bring diversity (to the events)," Moyer commented. "...we've always had a diverse team of age and race, and I just think that's the hallmark of Winston-Salem."

The Piedmont Slam received a grant from the Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County that will help it to further its reach, the men say.

"One of our goals is to become a nonprofit; another of our goals is to provide even better poetry and to increase our audience," Moyer said. "We think that all three of those things are essential for what we're trying to do."

Piedmont Slams in November and December will be held on the third Thursday of the month because of the holidays. For more information, visit <http://piedmontslam.art.officealive.com/default.aspx>.

News Clips

Compiled from staff wire and submitted reports

Police Department donates bikes

The Winston-Salem Police Department, in a partnership with the Salvation Army and Forsyth Technical Community College, has given 81 unclaimed bicycles to the Salvation Army's Angel Tree program.

To get the bicycles ready for the kids who will receive them at Christmastime, Forsyth Tech students in the automobile-body repair curriculum will touch up the bicycles to make them look as good as new.

The bikes entered police possession as abandoned or stolen property and are no longer needed as evidence or for investigative reasons. In cases where owners were known, certified letters were mailed to their last known address.

N.C. General Statute 15-12 authorizes the Police Department to donate unclaimed bicycles to nonprofit organizations recognized by the Internal Revenue Service.

The donation represents half of the 160 bicycles and scooters in police custody. Agencies other than the Salvation Army looking to participate in this program should contact Pat Burke at 336-773-7895, or send an e-mail to pburke@wspd.org.

Hinnant appointed to Superior Court

Gov. Bev Perdue has appointed District Court Judge Patrice Hinnant to the Superior Court District 18A for Guilford County. Hinnant will finish the unexpired term of Judge Henry Frye Jr., who retired July 31, 2009.

"Judge Hinnant's years of experience on the District Court bench have prepared her well for the Superior Court and will not only benefit the court, but also the citizens of Guilford County," said Perdue.

Judge Hinnant was elected to the District Court Bench in 1996, and was unopposed in her most recent re-election. Prior to that, she was a private attorney and an assistant public defender in Greensboro. She started her legal career as a paralegal with the firm of Chambers, Stein, Ferguson & Becton, and P.A. in Charlotte. Hinnant is active in her community, serving on numerous boards and civic groups in Guilford County and past president of the Greensboro Bar Association.

Hinnant attended undergraduate school at Spelman College in Georgia and received her law degree from N.C. Central University School of Law.

Police to review Silk Plant Forest case

Winston-Salem Police Chief Scott Cunningham has formed a committee of Police Department personnel to review the findings and recommendations of the Silk Plant Forest Citizens Review Committee and determine whether the Silk Plant Forest case should be reopened. Cunningham will lead the committee.

"I am forming this tempo-

rary review committee to respond to the recommendations made by the (City Council-appointed) committee to answer concerns and issues raised by the committee, to review the actions of the Winston-Salem Police Department and its personnel during the investigation of the case, and to provide information back to the Winston-Salem City Council, the city manager, and the community at large," Cunningham said.

The case involves the brutal beating of Jill Marker, who was an employee at Silk Plant Forest when she was attacked. Calvin Michael Smith was convicted of the attack, but a growing number of people believe police arrested the wrong man.

U.S. stimulus money to fight domestic violence in Greensboro

U.S. Senator Kay R. Hagan (D-NC) announced last week that Youth Focus, Inc. of Greensboro will receive a \$400,000 grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The Transitional Housing Assistance Program supports programs that provide transitional housing, assistance with rental or utility payments, and support services aimed at helping victims of domestic violence secure permanent housing.

"We at Youth Focus are very excited to receive these stimulus funds to pay for the operating expenses for My Sister's House," said Youth Focus Executive Director Chuck Hodieme.



Hagan



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If you're diagnosed with cancer, where you go first for treatment matters.

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