



Some of the members of WSSU's Grandparenting program with WSSU's Ambassador Molelekeng Rapolaki, second from left.

ALL THEY WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS ...

WSSU grandparents group hopes to personally present President Obama with holiday gift

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

A group of grandmothers, part of a Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) program for grandparents, are anxiously waiting for a unique holiday gift – a trip to the White House to present a gift to President Obama.

The seven grandmothers have created a very special quilt for the President and they hope they can present it to him in the near future. They have requested to meet the President through U.S. Sen. Richard Burr's (R-North Carolina) office earlier this year. So they anxiously wait, pray and sew.

"This quilt is special because it is filled with love and prayers," said Shirley Smith, a local grandparent participant in WSSU's Grandparenting Program who coordinated the creation of the quilt.

The full-bed-sized-quilt is like a tapestry, with the seals of every U.S. state and the District of Columbia, according to Smith. She said the grandmothers felt motivated when the President caught their attention in a unique way when he announced he was running for president.

"Back when President Obama first announced he was running for President, and we learned he was raised - and had a special relationship - with his grandmother, we then knew he would be a special person, even when many thought he didn't have a chance," Smith said.

The grandmothers met and started praying and



WSSU's Dr. Lenora Campbell.

knitting. They prayed throughout the entire 800-hour sewing process. It took eight months. The quilt is just about finished.

"Anyone raised by their grandmother has special insight into people and the world," Smith said. "I envision this quilt as something the President can use to cover himself to relax under a tree or something. It has enough prayers in it to cover him in love and work for him in blessings," she said.

WSSU's Grandparenting Program is affiliated with WSSU's School of Health Sciences and Division of Nursing. The program was initially funded in part by a four-year \$730,000 W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant received by the university in 2003 and funds from Georgia State University.

Currently, the program is funded by the NC Department Health and Human Services. The funds are used to maintain a school

readiness program to provide academic support, health care and other assistance to families where grandparents are the primary caretakers of children.

Two years ago, the grandparents created 13 hand-sewn quilts that were auctioned to benefit orphaned children who are victims of AIDS in Lesotho, Africa.

"Many of the grandparents who are making these quilts could very easily sell them to use the revenue for their own situations," says Dr. Lenora Campbell, associate dean for the Division of Nursing and project director of WSSU's Grandparenting Program. "It's inspiring how they look beyond their circumstances to help others they don't know - whether for school supplies for children in another country or providing inspiration for the President of the United States."

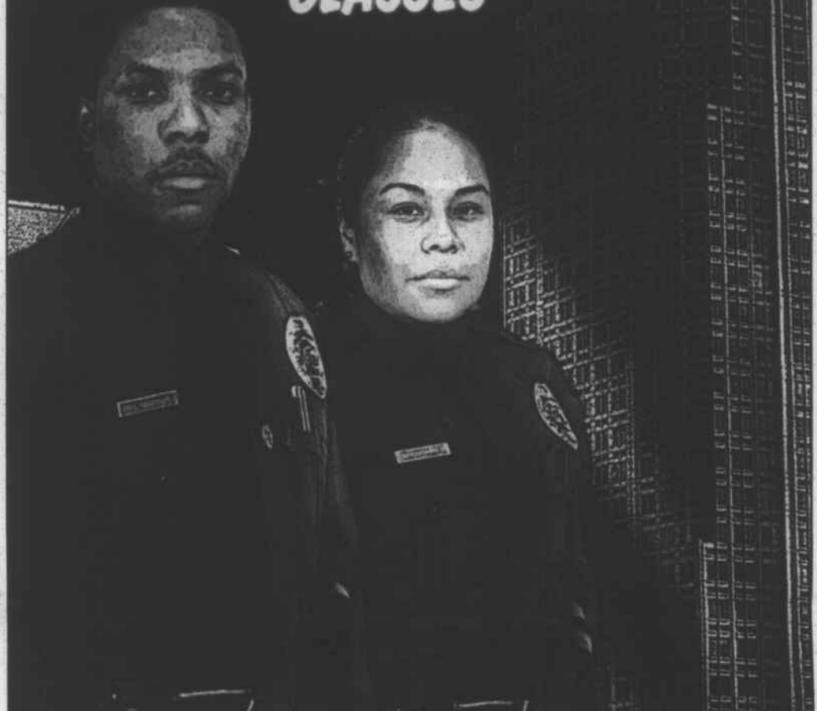
FOR ART'S SAKE



Arts Council Photo

Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County grant recipients hold a check for \$1.825 million - the amount the Council awarded to 42 arts and cultural organizations and 19 individual artists for the 2009-2010 grant period. It is the largest amount ever awarded by the Arts Council in an annual grant cycle.

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