



Photos by Todd Luck  
Bernard Thompson with his wife, Joanne (left), his son, BJ, and his daughter, Jonita Minor.



A special cake for a special occasion.



Bus Driver and local gospel talent Jamera McQueen sings at the banquet.



Pamela Macklin serves up her chili to children at the Kids Cafe.

Photos by Todd Luck



Fellow retirees (from left) Jeff Banner, Spencer Glenn and Jack Small.



A large crowd fills the banquet hall.

**Thompson**

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director, said few people know what a massive responsibility it is to get every child in the county to and from school safely each day. He estimated that there were probably 500 people in the department — including drivers, substitute drivers, management and support crews — responsible for transporting 29,000 students. He said to get the job done, it takes people with Thompson's dedication and temperament.

"He was someone in the workplace who was always going to be supportive and uplifting even in the hardest of times," said Glenn.

Thompson's friends and family kept the retirement celebration a secret, so Thompson was surprised when he walked into the banquet hall to cheers and applause. He said he was overwhelmed by the outpouring from his current and former colleagues.

When Thompson started driving a school bus back in 1974, he was a 17-year-old high school student. Back then, state rules allowed high schoolers to drive buses. Thompson even took his bus home every evening and drove it to school each morning after he dropped kids off at Fairview and Oak Summit elementary schools. Despite his young age, Thompson said the younger students were never insubordinate.

"The kids, they were very respectable," Thompson recalled. "... You respected them; they respected you. They didn't look at your age, they just looked at you as the bus driver."

After finishing high school, Thompson continued driving buses — taking students to and from Atkins and North Forsyth high schools.

As his career progressed, he did just about everything imaginable related to school buses — including painting them, fueling them, washing them, changing tires and doing other maintenance tasks.

He has served as an assistant supervisor for over a decade — helping to supervise 98 bus drivers in the south corridor.



Vickie Lindsay

Thompson said retirement will allow him to spend more time with his wife, Joanne, his son, BJ, and his daughter, Jonita Minor. However, he told the bus drivers that he would always be with them in spirit.

"Whenever I see these big yellow buses rolling, I'll always think about you, and if I see anything that's not safe, I'm going to call it in," Thompson said to laughter and loud applause.

BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE

Youngsters were anxious to dig in at the newest Kids Cafe, which opened last week at the Gateway YWCA.

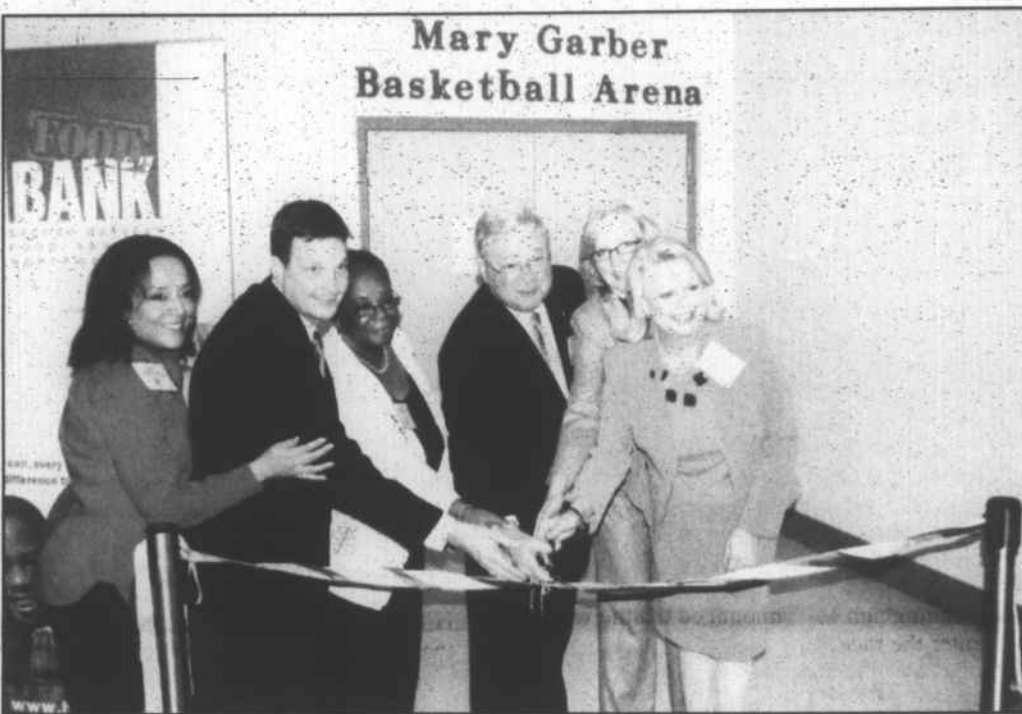
A program of Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina, the cafes are designed to provide children with a healthy meal several times a week in a safe environment, such as the Gateway Y's afterschool program. Young people from the community who are not affiliated with the Y are welcome to stop by on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 5-6 p.m. for a meal as well.

Second Harvest Executive Director Clyde Fitzgerald, who joined YWCA officials and Mayor Allen Jones last week for a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony, said the cafes help fight childhood hunger, which he called a prevalent local problem.

"One out of every seven people in Forsyth County need food assistance every week," said Fitzgerald, whose organization provides that assistance by distributing food to partner agencies in Forsyth and several other counties. Second Harvest has opened 12 Kids Cafes, eight of them in Forsyth County. Fitzgerald often tells the story of meeting a child at one of the cafes who said that he had skipped breakfast that morning because his family has to alternate eating breakfast because of their limited resources. It wasn't his "turn" to eat, he told Fitzgerald.

"No child should ever have to say it's not my turn to

*Food Bank opens another Kids Cafe*



Second Harvest's Daisy Rodriguez; Food Lion's Chris Blumenthal; YWCA CEO Florence Corpening; Second Harvest's Clyde Fitzgerald; Western Union's Christine Flock and YWCA Chair Suzanne Bullotta.

eat," said Fitzgerald.

YWCA CEO Florence Corpening requested that a cafe be placed at the Gateway Y because of its popular youth program and because the new facility has a kitchen, which is often used to teach families how to prepare healthy meals.

"We have a lot of children in our program who are below wealth and may or may not get a meal, and this is an opportunity for them to get a balanced meal," said Corpening, who is pushing for a cafe to be established at the Best Choice Center, which is operated by the YWCA. The Center operates an acclaimed after school and summer programs for children in East Winston.

Currently, only a small number of the more than 80 kids who attend the Best Choice Center are transported to the Gateway Y to eat at the Kids Cafe.

Chili and salad were served up to the little ones on the day of the ribbon-cutting. Fourth graders Brandon Brown and Tyree McKeller were among those digging in.

"It's good, and it's hot," said Brandon with a smile.

The smiles from the kids have a special meaning to the Cafe's newly-hired chef Pamela Macklin, who at age 50 is starting her life anew after 20 years of alcohol and drug addiction. She's currently living at the YWCA's Hawley House, which is for women recovering from

addiction. She credits the YWCA for not only turning her life around but now helping her obtain a steady job.

"It feels great," said Macklin about her recovery and her new gig. "Plus I'm doing something I like. I love to cook."

The cafe is being funded by a \$20,000 donation from the Food Lion Charitable Foundation and Western Union. Food Lion, in partnership with Tyson Foods, also helped Second Harvest fill its shelves last Friday, as the companies donated 39,000 pounds of chicken to the food bank. The food is vitally needed, since Second Harvest has experienced a 75 percent increase in demand this year.



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