

W-S sit-in movement to be spotlighted Tuesday

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The first sit-in victory in North Carolina that led to the desegregation of lunch counters in Winston-Salem 50 years ago will be celebrated in a series of events on Tuesday, May 25.

The celebration begins at 9:30 a.m. with an assembly at Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy. Students from local high schools will present excerpts from original essays, dramatic and dance performances in tribute to the sit-in participants. The individuals who challenged lunch-counter segregation through the sit-ins will be the honored guests at the assembly.

At noon, a ceremony will be held at the corner of 4th and Liberty streets, at the site of the S.H. Kress & Co. store where the sit-ins in Winston-Salem started.

At 6 p.m., the documentary "I'm Not My Brother's Keeper" will be shown at the Anderson Center on the campus of Winston-Salem State University. The documentary was produced by Wake Forest professors Mary Dalton and Susan Faust. After the screening, the audience will have the opportunity to engage in a question-and-answer session with the sit-in participants.

The Winston-Salem sit-in movement



Local sit-in hero Carl Matthews, second from right.

was initiated by Carl Matthews, a graduate of Winston-Salem Teachers College, on Feb. 8, 1960. Matthews was inspired by the sit-in in Greensboro that began eight days earlier. About 25 other black supporters, drawn by radio news reports of his protest, eventually joined Matthews, effectively closing down the lunch counter.

The protests immediately spread to other lunch counters in the city and attracted the support of sympathetic

white students at Wake Forest University. On Feb. 23, 11 African-American students and 10 white students held a joint sit-in at the Woolworth's lunch counter and were arrested, jailed, and found guilty of trespassing when they refused to leave. The students arrested from Winston-Salem Teachers College were Royal Joe Abbott, Everett L. Dudley, Deloris M. Reeves, Victor Johnson Jr., William Andrew Bright, Bruce Gaither, Jefferson Davis Diggs III, Algenia Giles, Donald C. Bradley, Lafayette A. Cook Jr. and Ulysses Grant Green; and from Wake Forest University were Linda G. Cohen, Linda Guy, Margaret Ann Dutton, Bill Stevens, Joe Chandler, Don F. Bailey, Paul Watson, Anthony Wayland Johnson, George Williamson, and Jerry Wilson.

The arrests sparked further sit-ins and picketing, leading Mayor Marshall Kurfee to appoint a "Goodwill Committee" of 10 white and 10 black citizens to devise a peaceful end to the protests. After consulting with the lunch-counter owners, the committee announced a desegregation agreement and on May 25, Carl Matthews returned to the Kress lunch counter and was served. It was the first sit-in victory in North Carolina.



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MULTIMILLION DOLLAR PRODUCER

The Chronicle (USPS 067-910) was established by Ernest H. Pitt and Ndubisi Egemonye in 1974 and is published every Thursday by Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc., 617 N. Liberty Street, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101. Periodicals postage paid at Winston-Salem, N.C. Annual subscription price is \$30.72.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636
Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1636

WFU

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the graduates. "...In times like these, we need you more than ever because you bring to the table what you have learned here ... a concrete understanding of what we can accomplish when we work together."

Before thousands in a packed Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Chenault, one of just a handful on blacks at the helm of a Fortune 500 Company, spoke of the challenges his generation faced in the height of the Civil Rights and Women's Liberation movements, and of the unique challenges that lie ahead for leaders in today's world. He urged the students to remain steadfast in their quests for the greater good.

"My generation believed very strongly in our country's ideals; we knew they were sound," he said. "But we also knew that we had an obligation ... to question whether or not we were living up to those ideals."

Some of the graduates in attendance didn't wait until graduation to begin living out the ideals the university espoused.

Twenty-one year-old Christopher Smyre, a native of Statesville, started a service organization for African American youth as an undergrad. Smyre, the second of four children, says the idea for the organization, which he dubbed My Brother's Keeper, came to him while he was still in high school.

Smyre, the first WFU student to graduate with a degree in biochemistry and biophysics, attended several different high schools during the course of his scholastic career, and noticed that the attitudes of the students he encountered varied based on the expectations they were held to.

"In the public schools, you didn't see everyone assuming and planning on (going to) college," explained Smyre, who served as president of the school's Mortar Board honors society during his senior year. "...To me, it seemed like without that goal and that idea ... people didn't work as hard as they could have."

As a sophomore, Smyre joined forces with a handful of fellow Wake students to mentor young men at his alma mater, Statesville High School. The program focused on developing students academically, spiritually and socially, explained Smyre, who also serves as youth pastor at his church, The Father's House of Glory in Salisbury. The volunteers met with the students at the high school twice a month, Smyre said.

"This past year, we moved it to the (WF) campus and I think that was a good thing. Some of them had never seen a college campus before, and coming here really inspired them," he related. "... (Leading the program) was very rewarding. I think the kids gained a realization that college is a possibility and that they can do it."

Smyre, who is headed to divinity and medical school at the University of Chicago, has ended My Brothers Keeper because of his relocation, but



Christopher Smyre



Janelle Summerville

says he hopes to launch a similar program in the future.

Psychology major Janelle Summerville also spent much of her college career in service to others. The 22 year-old Wake Forest choreographer traveled to 12 European nations during her college career, including a semester in Barcelona, Spain and another in Auckland, New Zealand. Though she enjoyed visiting each country, Summerville says it was a research trip to Kenya in the summer of 2009 that had the most profound effect on her life.

"Kenya just completely blew my mind," said Summerville, who traveled to the West African nation to study the self esteem of young girls who were orphaned by AIDS. "I'd never been to a place before with that amount of poverty and that amount of suffering."

When she came home to Wake Forest weeks later, Summerville says her perspective had changed drastically.

"I was so shell shocked," related Summerville, a native of Stafford, Va. "I kept thinking about the children that I worked with. It was definitely a jolting experience."

Summerville says she needed to do something. She assembled a committee of 28 students and created the campus charity Wake Up! The organization's goal was to raise funds to benefit the Kenya Kids Can program, which Summerville says feeds over 20,000 Kenyan children a day.

Through three innovative fundraisers, Summerville and her partners were able to raise over \$9000 for the effort, enough to feed over 100,000 children.

"It was just wonderful seeing the people that came out to support it. That was something that gave me a lot of hope," Summerville, the third of four children, said of Wake Up! "This experience has taught me that there are a lot of people who do care ... (and that) optimism, with hard work and focus, is unbeatable."



William Conner, professor of biology, hoods Ken Chenault.

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