

Promoter Montgomery finds success instigating battles

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

If you want Donna Montgomery to do something, tell her she can't.

Montgomery, the owner of Total Entertainment event planning and production company and co-owner of United Health Rehabilitation Services, doesn't shy away from a challenge. In fact, it was a direct challenge that led Montgomery, a native of Marion, to establish Total Entertainment - which is best known for its annual Battle of the Bands event - in 2003.

Montgomery, a WSSU alumna, was working part time as a host at the school's 90.5 radio station when one of her colleagues challenged her to try to contact famed playwright and actor Tyler Perry and convince him to bring a show to Winston-Salem.

"He said, 'I bet you can't,' I said, 'I bet I can,'" the mother of two related with a smile. Montgomery was successful in tracking down one of Perry's promoters, but there was a catch.

"They told me I had to

guarantee them \$75,000. I had \$750 in my account, but I said, 'Okay, we can do this,'" she said. "I had no clue what I was getting into."

Montgomery pulled funds from her 401k retirement account to cover the cost of advertising and securing a venue, and hoped for the best. Her gamble paid off.

"By the time the tickets were on sale three weeks, I knew that we were going to make and beat the amount of money that we had guaranteed," she declared. "...That was my first profit. I walked away and I was like, 'Oh, I can do this,' and I became addicted."

Of course, not every event has gone as smoothly as her first foray, but Montgomery has remained steadfast in her mission of providing entertainment - and benefits for the community - to Winston-Salem. Since that time, she has produced a variety of events, from concerts to plays she authored. Total Entertainment's biggest event is the annual Battle of the Bands exhibition. Three thousand fans came out for the inaugural event in 2004.



Donna Montgomery

"When I looked back at the film and the pictures, I started to cry because I could not believe that it actually happened," Montgomery said of the event's initial boom. "While it's happening, you don't realize it."

Held annually at Bowman Gray Stadium, Battle of the Bands showcased high school and college bands before a crowd of 5,000 last year.

Montgomery says she makes sure the event, which originally began as a competition, is beneficial to not just her company, but the community as a whole. She allows

the bands that participate to sell their own tickets and take home a portion of the proceeds, in addition to the stipends each band is given for participating.

"Donna Montgomery is doing all she can to help increase our scholarships right here at Winston-Salem State," said WSSU Band Director Dr. Michael Magruder, whose Red Sea of Sound has participated in the program since its inception. "...This production is well done. It's in good taste, it's family friendly and it's very entertaining and that's what bands are about."



Magruder

Profits from each Battle of the Bands support community initiatives, said Montgomery. Proceeds from the 2010 show, slated for Sept. 5, will support a year-long reading and math tutorial for children at two community centers, she revealed.

Montgomery, who hopes to complete her master's degree in education at Strayer University later this year,

says she has had a heart for children, especially those with physical and emotional problems, since grade school, when she stood up for a child with downs syndrome who was being picked on by her classmates.

"Ever since that time, I have always felt that I needed to protect and help assist that population," she commented. "It's just been a part of my life; that's what I do."

It was this passion that led Montgomery to help found United Health Rehabilitation Services. After more than a decade working with youth with behavioral and mental health issues, Montgomery said she became fed up with watching companies squander money while their clients went without the services they needed.

"A lot of people were in it for the money, and at that time, there was a lot of money to be made by providing the services," she related.

"...I've always thought that if you're not happy with the ways things are going, then you should do something about it."

Montgomery joined forces with Dr. Clem Ihecinacho, a N.C. A&T professor, to create United Health, which provides services to youth with behavioral and emotional problems late last year.

With the Battle of the Bands quickly approaching, Montgomery is splitting her time between her two loves: children and entertainment. She is hopeful the upcoming show will be successful enough to provide for both.

"I really wish people could see that more than just battle of the bands comes from (the event)," she said. "...I really, truly want to make a difference."

Battle of the Bands will be held Sunday, Sept. 5, at 6 p.m. at Bowman Gray Stadium. Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$20 the day of the event and \$50 for a family four pack. For more information, contact Montgomery at (336) 965-9016.



This should not be the most difficult part of your workout.

If decreased range of motion and knee pain are keeping you from enjoying the activities you love, you should see an orthopaedic specialist. At Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, our experienced physicians and advanced technology mean less invasive procedures, less pain and shorter recovery times. Call 336-716-WAKE today for a free information kit and to make an appointment to see a Wake Forest Baptist orthopaedic specialist.

ORTHOPAEDICS | Call 336-716-WAKE for an appointment.
wfubmc.edu/orthopedics



Wake Forest University Baptist
MEDICAL CENTER®
A Mission to Care. A Mission to Cure.

