



Submitted Photo

Members of the Friends of Winston-Salem stand to be recognized during Saturday's brunch.

## Friends get their kicks by giving back

BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE

Friends of Winston-Salem celebrated its 20th Anniversary with a brunch Saturday at the Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum's Windsor Club.

Sandy Porter and Elaine Bevels formed Friends as a woman's social and community service club. It began with 12 charter members.

"(Elaine and I) were here and thinking about, you know, there are a lot of women around here that can help the community, and help ourselves as well, and we just called some of our friends and started Friends," recalled Porter.

The Club has 17 members today, which leaders say is its membership limit. New members must be nominated by current members and approved by the group. The Club holds monthly meetings at the homes of members and even takes regular retreats, where they plan their charity projects. Members of the close knit group say they have deepened their bond by giving back together.

"Over the years it's been really exciting and really fun; all your friends and you've done so many things together and traveled together and been through sickness and death together," said Bevels. "We've just been through so much together."

The Club's charity work has been varied. They have served as volunteers at the YWCA Best Choice Center, ushers at the National Black Theatre Festival and hostesses at an 1990s event at the Coliseum that featured then Attorney General Janet Reno. The Friends have adopted the senior citizens at Cherry Hill Apartments, sponsoring events there like bingo parties, cookouts and holiday programs. Each Thanksgiving and Christmas, the Club adopts a local family. Friends also awarded an athletic scholarship to the Kappa Magic AAU basketball team and a dance scholarship that allows a local youngster to take lessons. They also financially support the annual scholarships presented by the Emancipation Association of Forsyth County.

Friends President Sharon Pratt, who has been with the group 10 years, said the group's charity work is what keeps her active in Friends.

"We stay focused and we're proactive, and I love what we're doing as a group," said Pratt, who was brought into the group by her mother, Carrie Fitzgerald.

Every two years, the Club holds a large scale fundraising event. This year's event - The Shades of Pink Jazz Brunch - happened to coincide with the Club's anniversary. More than 200 attended the Brunch, which was emceed by Judge Denise Hartsfield and featured the musical stylings of Galvin Crisp, Jr. and Herb Stephens of Class Act. In addition to the music, attendees were treated to a pink-themed fashion show as they dined. Proceeds from the event - which came from ticket



Photos by Todd Luck

Herb Stephens and Galvin Crisp Jr. perform.



Twanda McCollum struts in the fashion show.



Judge Denise Hartsfield speaks.

sales and a silent auction - went to WomanWise, a Forsyth County Department of Public Health program that provides free breast and cervical cancer screenings for local women.

Linda Lindsay, a charter member of Friends and 22-year breast cancer survivor, asked other breast cancer survivors at the brunch to stand up. More than 15 women did so.

Lindsay has been an active advocate for breast cancer awareness. Over the years, she's started a support group, volunteered at Cancer Services and appeared in the YWCA's first Sister Speak! calendar, which featured breast cancer survivors. She said she was glad to help

WomanWise. "It is heartfelt to do something for breast cancer," said Lindsay. "Ever since I was diagnosed, I've wanted to reach out and help other women."

WomanWise's Michelle Metscher reminded attendees that early detection can save lives. She urged them to check themselves regularly for strange lumps and to get screened annually if they are over 40. She said those with no insurance who meet the income requirement should take advantage of the WomenWise's WISE WOMAN Clinic, located at the Health Department, for free breast exams, mammograms and pap smears.



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## Another Goal Met



Photo courtesy of M. Johnson

Winston-Salem's Monique Johnson holds her Elon University School of Law degree after the school's recent commencement exercises. Born with scoliosis and dwarfism, Johnson has faced more challenges than many, but she has never been deterred. Although she is less than two-feet tall and moves with the aid of a wheelchair, Johnson is an acclaimed artist who now has two college degrees (She earned her undergraduate degree from N.C. A&T State University). Johnson, who has been an inspiration to many, has been featured in newspapers, magazines and television shows. She is planning to take the North Carolina Bar Exam later this summer.

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