

Project seeks to power local female-led revolution of positivity

BY LAYLA GARMES
THE CHRONICLE

City natives Nakida McDaniels and Shannon Brooks have a plan to harness "girl power" to effect positive change throughout Winston-Salem.

They are behind the Women's & Girls' Project of Winston-Salem, which is designed to empower women and girls ages 12 and older to improve their own lives and the lives of others. The Project will focus chiefly on the areas of health and well being, personal capacity building and civic accountability/ neighborhood improvement.

"We've just seen a lot of different needs that were not being met," explained McDaniels, a community organizer for Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods. "The idea is for women and girls to take their lives into their own hands."



Black

Among the Project's goals are creating a database to connect women and girls to resources that pertain to their unique situations. The Project will also offer the Inside Out Healing Institute, which would offer training sessions and seminars to equip women to deal with the issues in their lives

and a Giving Circle, where women and girls would raise money for a philanthropic cause. Sistas Weighing In, a blog that invites members to sound off about an array of issues that affect them, is also a component of the Project.

"It is a safe haven," Brooks, the owner of Brooks & Associates financial consultancy firm, said about the Project. "It's a place where women and girls can come and feel that they have a voice."

The group will meet monthly at the Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods (NBN) headquarters at the Augsburg Community Center. St. NBN has agreed manage any funds taken in by the Project, which McDaniels and Brooks are currently funding themselves.

The Project will hold its first informational session on Saturday, when those who are interested will hear about the program's goal and be invited to offer their input.

"We feel like we're ready now. We've got the structure of the program, now all we need is the input of the women and girls," said McDaniels, a mother of three. "One thing I'm really big on is bringing African American women into leader-



Photos by Layla Garmes

Keisha Black (left) poses with Nakida McDaniels and Shannon Brooks.

ship roles where we can have a say... Our ultimate objective of this project is that women and girls take control of the work and know that they are empowered to effect change in the community."

Under the umbrella of the Women's & Girls' Project, McDaniels and Brooks have also founded the Sisterhood Community Partnership, which is specifically for women and girls in the LaDeara Crest community. A pajama party for women and girls in LaDeara, a community adjacent to Bowen Park in East Winston, is already in the works, as is an annual community service project for a cause of residents' choosing. LaDeara Crest resident Keisha Black is helping to organize the Partnership, with the help of Resident Service Coordinator Isiah "Ike" Black (no relation).

"I think this is the perfect project, I think this is the perfect time, and I think it's the perfect people," said the mother of three. "...It's a win-win situation."

She added that she hopes the Partnership will help to break down negative stereotypes about women in the community.

"We all have different attributes, talents and skills that I think are sometimes overlooked," said Black, a cosmetologist. "I think this program is going to be the perfect thing for showing women and girls their potential."

Ike Black said he felt the Partnership would

be impactful for women in the neighborhood.

"I thought it was a good target group here because we have a lot of single mothers who are raising their children on their own," he remarked. "They don't always have the resources and sometimes, the support, to do things to make life better for them."

Keisha Black said the Partnership, which hosted an interest meeting several months ago, has been well received by her neighbors.

McDaniels, a product of the impoverished Lakeside community, said she and Brooks are excited about the potential the project has to help other women in the community.

"My philosophy in life is somebody give me a chance. Based on where I grew up, a lot of people could've counted me out, but they didn't," she said. "I need for us (African American women) to see that we don't always have to sit around and wait for somebody to give us something. We have the power."

The Women and Girls Project will hold its first informational session at the Augsburg Community Center, 502 N Broad Street, on Saturday, Sept. 1 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, visit <http://www.womenandgirlsproject-w-s.com> or [Facebook.com/TheWomensGirlsProjectOfWinstonSalem](https://www.facebook.com/TheWomensGirlsProjectOfWinstonSalem).

Lowe elected chair of Fifth District

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Dr. Paul Lowe Jr., pastor of Winston-Salem's Shiloh Baptist Church, made history Saturday when he was elected the first African-American chair of the Fifth Congressional District Democratic Party.

The vast Fifth District includes all of Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Davie, Stokes, Surry, Watauga, Wilkes and Yadkin counties and parts of Forsyth, Iredell and Rockingham counties.

"It is a great honor to represent all the hard working people of Western North Carolina. For too long, people of the Fifth District and the Democratic Party have been disconnected. I want all voters to know that the Democratic Party is the party that represents working people's lives and values," Lowe said.



Lowe

In 2000, according to Census data, the District had more than 620,000 residents, most of them — about 90 percent — are white. The District was about seven percent black and just under four percent Hispanic.

Republicans have held the Fifth Congressional seat since 1995. U.S. Virginia Foxx has held the seat since 2005 and has easily beaten a string of Democratic challengers over the last eight years. This November, she faces Democrat Elisabeth Motsinger, a Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Board member.

Lowe says Democrats must take the issues to the voters in order to be successful.

"Too many times, Democrats have let the Republicans frame the debate, when the math is really quite simple. It takes 40 seniors paying \$6,350 more a year in health costs to pay for a \$250,000 tax cut for one millionaire under a Romney-Ryan budget," he said. "Our Congresswoman says she supports Ryan's plan to completely dismantle Medicare. I don't think voters in Western North Carolina see it that way."

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WSSU also has a special rate of \$113 at the Hyatt Regency Cleveland at the Arcade. For reservations, call 888-421-1442.