

Nonprofits get rent-free home in new Center

BY CHANEL DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem Center for Education and the Arts officially opened last week, giving local nonprofits a place to call home.

A ribbon-cutting was held at the "John 3:16 Building" (624/630 W. Sixth St.) on Tuesday, Oct. 14. Years ago, it housed the N.C. Employment Security Commission. First Baptist Church Fifth Street had purchased the building and planned to raze it for a parking lot. The church ended up signing it over to make way for the Center for Education and the Arts, which will provide rent-free space for nonprofits that provide education and growth through the arts.

"A group of us felt that it (the building) was too good of an old building to let it be completely torn down, and we felt that we could do something that would work to make our community better," said Center President Cathy Owen. "We came up with the idea to renovate the building and focus on education and the arts."

The seed was planted six years ago, Owen said. After First Baptist Church volunteers gutted the interior of the building, Owen and others spent years raising money from individuals, corporations and foundations to convert the 17,500-square-foot building. It is now home to Authoring Action, a teen poetry and creative arts group; Dress for Success, which helps local low income women prepare for job interviews by providing business attire; Leadership Winston-Salem, which offers a renowned networking program to acquaint profes-



Board member Nancy Baxley, BB&T's Chairman Kelly King, Mayor Allen Joines and WSCEA President Cathy Owen cut the ribbon.



Freeman

sionals with various aspects of the city; and The Winston Salem Street School, a private high school for disenfranchised students. The school was the first nonprofit to call the building home, settling in when the building was still being renovated.

"We wanted to reach out to agencies in our community and give them ways to enhance the community while focusing on people who would not normally receive the services from

organizations in this building," said Owen.

Thirteen years after it was founded, Authoring Action finally has a permanent home, and Nathan Ross Freeman, who started the group, says that feels good.

"This is the first time we have been in a place that we have control over," Freeman said. "To have a place where we can control the thermostat, to not be concerned about being too loud, to have a place where we have priority ... It's one of those things that takes a while to sink in."

Authoring Action's space includes a workshop, a music and staff room and an area for the Executive Director Lynn Rhoades. Authoring Action members range in age from 12-18 and have gained a local following for their original works.

"The kids are more than excited about it," Freeman said. "When they came in and saw that we

had all of this room and that this wasn't the only room, they loved it because they could tell that it was them that we had in mind."

Winston-Salem Center for Education and the Arts Board member Nigel Alston said the free spaces will allow the nonprofits to continue to do good deeds without worrying about rent. "They can do more of what they need to do, and are charged to do, versus

worrying about overhead," he said. "More of the money that the organizations raise can go for the things that they really need or what their charge is versus worrying about huge expenses for their facilities."

Owen said there is room for another nonprofit.

"We would really like for that organization to focus on the arts," she said. "I hope that the organizations that are in this building will be here for many years."



Owen



Mack



Mendez

Fashion show to honor cancer survivors

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Union Baptist Church will sponsor a Cancer Survivor Faith Fashion Show on Sunday, Oct. 26 at 4 p.m.

The fashion show is being held in honor of Mother Frances J. Mack of Union Baptist Church and First Lady Sarah Mendez of Emmanuel Baptist Church. Both women are cancer survivors. The evening will include prayer for those battling all forms of cancer and praise for deliverance from cancer.

Following the fashion show, there will be a gala reception to recognize all survivors. The event is being called a great way for families and friends to come together to honor and remember those affected by the disease.

A donation of \$10 is requested for the fashion show. Funds raised will be used to support area cancer support groups.

For more information, call the Union Baptist Church office at 336-724-9305 ext. 222 or visit www.unionbaptistwsnc.org. The church is located at 1200 N. Trade St. and is led by Dr. Sir Walter Mack Jr.

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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

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