

BUSTA'S PERSON OF THE WEEK

Carter High School has the Advantage



Submitted photo
 "You can leave the Dis somewhere else. Don't Dis us," says Principal Donna Horton Berry of Carter High School.

Submitted photo
 Carter High School staff members wear red for education and Women's History Month.

BY BUSTA BROWN
 THE CHRONICLE

"We say no to dis-advantage and yes to seeing the advantage," said Donna Horton Berry. Horton Berry is the principal at Carter High School in Winston-Salem. Some describe Carter as a high school for disadvantaged students, but Horton Berry disagrees.

"We teach our students to see the advantage of having a pure and unconditional love, and to have something that beautiful is far from a disadvantage," she said.

Save the date of Oct. 25 and come meet the staff at their Port-A-Pit Bar-B-Que fundraiser from 11a.m. - 2 p.m. on campus at 851 Highland Court in Winston-Salem. The fundraiser is to support their "No Dis" campaign. "We try not to have any Dis, because when you see disability, you might not recognize the ability. We look for honor instead of dishonor, harmony instead of dis-harmony, we're all about the ability. You can leave the Dis somewhere else. Don't Dis us," Horton Berry said affectionally about her students.

I pulled into the school's parking lot, it was raining, and time for parents to pick up their children. This was a beautiful

sight to see. I saw adults sharing umbrellas with each other, taking turns escorting the students and each other to their vehicles. I saw smiles, hugging goodbye, and I heard plenty of "I love you."

Principal Horton Berry was right. I witnessed nothing but pure and unconditional love at Carter High School. I couldn't tell the difference between the teachers or parents.

As I was smiling and enjoying my view, so was Principal Horton Berry. "That's what our staff, students and parents give each other daily here at Carter High School. I see this every day as I walk the halls and visit the classrooms," she said.

I asked Horton Berry about her feelings about being the principal for Carter. "I can't believe it," she said. "I'm in awe that anyone would put such faith in me, to let me be responsible for children that share themselves so openly with us every day."

I spoke with some of the staff members, who said Horton Berry is a very intelligent and talented principal who could have worked anywhere in Winston-Salem, but she chose Carter, so I asked her why.

"I feel like my personality is well-

sued to working in an environment that requires some extra patience. I'm really good at figuring things out and finding creative solutions to things. When you work with students that have some challenges, you have to teach work at a difference pace to see their abilities, and that's something I was born to do," she said. "The staff is awesome as well. They made me feel as if I were a part of the Carter family. Our staff is to be giving of themselves. I make sure I choose people that are infinitely patience, compassionate and caring."

Some of the students are at Carter for seven years, which doesn't happen in a traditional high school. "So our students are more than students to us; they become family members," Horton Berry said.

Assistant Principal Shawna Penn shared why she loves being a part of the Carter family. "I love to see the kids running to get here with smiles on their faces. I love seeing the teachers laughing and enjoying what they have for our students, and most of all I love the innocence in our students and how excited they are about learning. Our students give their all in spite of what they have going on, and that's what life is all about."

Carter started off as South Park High

School on South Main Street in the '70s as a specialized school that had some vocational components, like auto body, a print shop, and more for students that had to graduate from high school with a trade. Horton said as time changed, the population at South Park changed.

"Kids with some different learning abilities began attending the school for the hands-on curriculum. In the '90s, the school became more specialized, and then in 2009 we opened this beautiful new building that is now called C. Douglas Carter High School."

I asked what are the joys of working with the students at Carter.

"They come in the building excited and ready to win," said Horton Berry.

That winning spirit transfers to athletics. The C. Douglas Carter Wildcats won the Special Olympics Basketball State Championship, has a state champions cheerleading squad and the volleyball team took third place to add to the many trophies in the huge case in the hall. They have lots of activities such as holiday dances, and prom during spring.

Checkout the rest of my interview with Principal Donna Horton Berry on The Chronicle's YouTube channel at WinstonsalemChronicle.com.

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