

THE CHRONICLE COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS 2019

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WSSU honors 1949 grad during commencement ceremony 1,100 graduates 'depart to serve'

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

Nearly 1,100 Rams transitioned to alumni status last week when Winston-Salem State University held its spring commencement ceremony on Friday, May 10, at the Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

While dozens of graduates danced their way across the stage to receive their degrees, the best graduation stroll came from 99-year-old Elizabeth Barker Johnson. A native of Elkin, Johnson is a member of the 6888th Central Postal Directory, the only all-female, African American Women's Army Corps battalion to serve overseas during World War II. After serving her country in the U.S. Army, Johnson went on to become the first female to enroll at Winston-Salem Teachers College on the GI Bill, a benefit designed to help service members and veterans cover the cost of getting an education or job training.

Records show Johnson earned her degree in education in 1949, but at the time she was working in Virginia and was unable to attend the graduation ceremony. At her 99th birthday party earlier this

month, Johnson was surprised with the news that she would finally have the opportunity to walk across the stage at graduation.

Before presenting Johnson with her degree on Friday morning, Chancellor Elwood Robinson said he was honored to be able to formally present Johnson with her degree. He said, "Today Winston-Salem State University is delighted to recognize an outstanding member of WSSU, Alumni Mrs. Elizabeth Bernice Barker Johnson."

As she made her way to the podium, the coliseum erupted in applause. While trying to hold back tears, Johnson reached out and embraced Chancellor Robinson with a hug. In a press release issued by WSSU, Robinson said Johnson is the embodiment of the meaning of the HBCU's motto.

"From serving her country during World War II to impacting the lives of hundreds of students as a classroom teacher in North Carolina and Virginia, PFC Elizabeth Barker Johnson is the embodiment of Winston-Salem State's motto, 'Enter to Learn. Depart to Serve.'" He continued, "We are inspired by her

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Graduates from Winston-Salem State University and 1949 graduate Elizabeth Barker Johnson during the commencement ceremony last week. Photos by Tevin Stinson

Local artist adds pizzazz to construction fences

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

The construction site at the Innovation Quarter's Bailey Power Plant got a little more pizzazz last week when local artists unveiled their masterpieces on the construction fences located on the corner of Fourth and Patterson streets on Tuesday, May 7.

The collaboration celebrates a partnership between the construction industry, local art-



Last week Art Revolve unveiled art work on the construction fences on the corner of Fourth and Patterson. Submitted photo

ists, Art Revolve, Authoring Action, and Helium Winston-Salem, a giving circle made up of arts patrons and other community members who are directly engaged in developing the future of our city's arts and culture. Coleman Team, who works with the development team working to make improvements on the Power Plant, said when they were approved by Art Revolve to do the project, they were excited to participate.

"Construction fences are everywhere downtown and rather having something that's an eyesore or obstruction to people walking on the sidewalk, why not make an opportunity to do some writing

and art that relates to the project and the area," said Team. "These are the first ones in town and I think it's an amazing opportunity to take something that's usually an eyesore and turn it into a public piece of art."

Each piece of art painted by a local artist is paired with writing from a piece by a student participant in Authoring Action. Before the unveiling, Mayor Allen Joiner thanked the organizations that made the project possible.

The art is located near the Bailey Power Plant at the corner of Fourth and Patterson streets. For more information on the artwork, contact Lynn Rhoades at 336-749-1317.

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