

# THE CHRONICLE

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## Forsyth Seafood fights for East Winston

### USDA change threatens EBT authorization for fresh fish.

BY BRIDGET ELAM  
THE CHRONICLE

“Another fight.” Those were the words of Virginia Hardesty, owner of Forsyth Seafood.

The fight she is speaking of is with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and its recent changes to SNAP benefits (formerly known as Food Stamps).

In September 2018, the USDA amended the retailer eligibility criteria for restaurants. The new statute reads: Restaurant firms with more than 50% of their total gross sales from hot and/or cold prepared foods not intended for home preparation or home consumption (including prepared foods consumed on the premises or sold for carryout) cannot accept EBT payments. This is known as the “Restaurant Threshold.” Technically, the Restaurant Threshold rule excludes Forsyth Seafood from being authorized to accept EBT purchases. By losing Food and Nutrition Service (FNS [USDA]) authorization to accept SNAP (EBT), an already underserved population would be further marginalized.

For Forsyth Seafood, this is a technicality they are working hard to overcome. As many may be aware, there are two sides to Forsyth Seafood.



Virginia Hardesty and Ashley Hardesty Armstrong, proprietors of Forsyth Seafood, fight to keep EBT authorization.

One side is the fresh market store and the other is a 100-seat restaurant. The fresh market store currently accepts EBT. However, because the restaurant provides cooked food that contributes to more than 50% of sales, Forsyth Seafood is ineligible to receive EBT payments on the fresh

market side. Not being able to accept EBT would be a significant hit for the establishment. “We would lose about 30% of our business,” said Virginia Hardesty. “That’s the make-or-break number.” There are certain exceptions available under the Restaurant

Threshold rule, one being if the restaurant is in a food desert (FNS 7 CFR § 278.1). East Winston is considered a food desert and Forsyth Seafood is in the middle of East Winston. So, it’s possible Forsyth Seafood can keep their authorization under the exception clause. They have filed the

paperwork. Hardesty hopes the appeal will be accepted and they will continue to serve some of their most loyal customers who frequent the fresh market store.

“People’s access to fresh food is very limited already. It’s devastating to many of our customers,” Hardesty said.

Ashley Hardesty Armstrong, who is the chef of Forsyth Seafood and founding chef and curator of The Table Experience, mentioned that the change would not only affect the business’s bottom line, but those who have become like family as well.

“It would be really unfortunate if people in the area don’t have access to whole foods. We’ve been supporting fishermen in the Outer Banks of North Carolina for 35 years, buying directly from them. If this [EBT authorization] goes away, they can’t support their families,” she continued. “Not to mention the employees, their hours would be cut.”

With the thought of having to do away with the fresh market side of the business, Hardesty and Armstrong remain hopeful.

“It’s encouraging to have the support of Virginia Foxx, Alma Adams and Dr. William Barber,” said Hardesty. “They have helped us fight this issue.” In addition,

Hardesty said they have received support and valuable resources from Derwin Montgomery, Richard Burr, Lafayette and Sandie Jones (SMSI Marketing) and Womble, Bond, and Dickinson, LLP.

Forsyth Seafood has been in business since 1984 and is a staple in the East Winston community.

They have been instrumental in supporting East Winston by sponsoring various little league teams and other community events. This time, Hardesty asks the community to help them by contacting their elected officials and asking them to get behind them and support their fight for EBT authorization.

“Food stamps are key to providing fresh food to many people in the East Winston area where young people are trying to take care of their families and the elderly are just trying to make ends meet. Forsyth Seafood serves a purpose in East Winston and Winston-Salem. In this fight, we hope the USDA will enable Forsyth Seafood and its employees to continue that purpose,” said Hardesty.

The USDA’s decision about Forsyth Seafood’s retailer eligibility is expected in the coming weeks.

## New daycare opens in Winston-Salem’s East End

BY TEVIN STINSON  
THE CHRONICLE

At a place in time where infants can operate the latest version of the iPhone before they can spell their names and seeing children playing outside is rare, My Little Genius’ Child Development Center is looking to go back to the basics when it comes to education of our youth.

“You look at what’s happening in schools now, one of the big things they talk about is the children can’t read or write and part of the reason for that is we’ve become dependent on technology,” said Dr. Tony Burton, My Little Genius’ founder and chief executive officer.

“One of the things we’re trying to do here is bring back the basics

so our children have the foundation they truly need. We’re going to teach them how to write using the three lines; we’re going to teach them about reading. We’re going to teach them about going outside and playing in the dirt.”

Burton, who earned his doctorate in education administration from Columbia University, is no stranger to the early education scene here in Winston-Salem. For more than a decade, Burton served as CEO of Northwest Child Development Centers (NWCDC) Inc. of Winston-Salem, a nonprofit founded in 1970. As CEO of NWCDC, Burton was responsible for leading and coordinating activities for four different childcare centers including MudPies Downtown East, which was located downtown until it was sold in 2018.

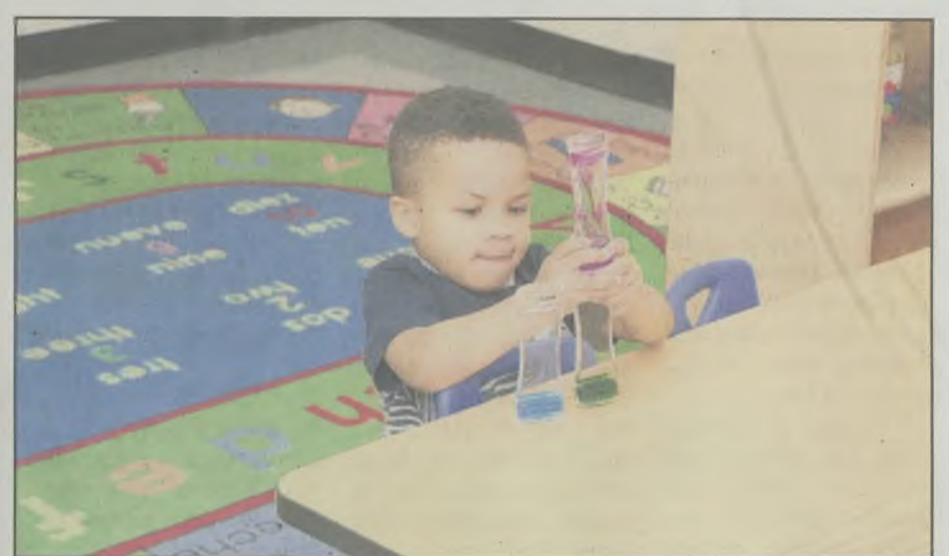
Burton said after years of working in education, he started to realize that kids don’t know how to play and interact with each other anymore. He said My Little Genius’ is about getting back to the grassroots of learning,

communicating and working with others.

“We’re looking to go back to the grassroots,” Burton said. “Our children don’t know how to go outside and play anymore. They know how to do a lot of things with computers and cell phones, so I saw this as an opportunity to give children a chance to go back and grab what they really need.”

Located at 1000 East Fourth Street, My Little Genius’ offers child development for ages birth-12 years. My Little Genius’ will also offer after school care for older children. The classrooms throughout the building are separated by age and each classroom has age appropriate items designed to help children develop. There are separate classrooms for infants, two-year-olds, three-year-olds, four-year-olds, and five-year-olds.

Burton said once everything is up and running, My Little Genius’ will be unlike any other childcare facility in the area. Along with learning the basics of reading and writing, Burton also talked about introducing children



A young man enjoys some playtime at My Little Genius’ Child Development Center.

to farming, yoga, live science projects, animals, and much more.

“When I was growing up, my mother would put us outside in the morning and we would stay out all day. And we didn’t have a whole lot of things to play with, we made things to play with,” Burton continued. “We had to go out and be creative ... but we’ve gotten away from that. But what we’re trying to do here is go back and pick up some of those things that help kids be kids.”

While giving the grand tour of the facility

last week, Brittani M. Williams, center director, said her goal is to create as many positive experiences for the children and their families as possible. She said it’s important to provide support for the entire family because learning has to happen outside the classroom as well.

“We only have them about eight hours out of the day. If there’s not a connection with the family, then it’s not really a connection at all,” Williams said. If the family isn’t on board, there’s going to be conflict.

The family is primary and we’re secondary; however, to create a fostering and nurturing environment, we need to have the families involved as much as possible.”

According to Williams, parents are welcome to visit their child at any time throughout the day. My Little Genius’ also offers an app that will allow parents to see what their young geniuses are doing at any time.

When asked what sets My Little Genius’ apart from other childcare

See Genius on A8

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