

Celebration

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type of thing she would be hosting. She said even at a young age, her sister demonstrated a passion for giving and helping those in need. Alana Alston, who was a native of Winston-Salem, lost her life at

she would be doing if she was here. She passed away when she was 22, but even before that, as a teenager she would do anything to put a smile on a kid's face and make them happy, so this is her exact aura. This is her," Alston said. "We wanted to keep her energy alive and this was the best way to do it, doing exactly



Photo by Tevin Stinson

This year's celebration hosted 20 children and their families.

the young age of 22 after complications from surgery after battling necrotizing fasciitis in 2013. The Alana Alston Foundation was started in her honor. The purpose of the foundation is to keep Alana's legacy alive by enriching the community, promoting excellence in youth and fostering family relationships.

"What we're doing is exactly what

what she would do if she were here."

Along with the holiday celebration, the Alana Alston Family Foundation also hosts an annual back-to-school giveaway, community Halloween party, and a winter coat drive. For more information visit <https://www.alanaalstonfamilyfoundation.org/>.

Remembering an icon
City pays respects to Hashim Saleh, longtime leader of Otesha Creative Arts Ensemble

BY TEVIN STINSON
 THE CHRONICLE

Empty seats were scarce in the auditorium of the Anderson Center last Sunday evening as mourners showed up in droves to pay their last respects to Hashim Saleh, longtime leader of Otesha Creative Arts Ensemble, the state's oldest African American drumming and dance troupe.

A native of New York, Saleh moved to Winston-Salem in the 1970s and took over as artistic director of Otesha in the mid-1980s when the founder, Amatullah Salem, moved away. In an article published by The Chronicle in 2013, Saleh talks about his family's roots that can be traced back to his great-grandmother who was born a slave in Charleston, S.C. He also mentions his other great-grandmother who was Cherokee.

Under his leadership, Otesha continued to thrive and make appearances throughout the state

and country. Otesha is probably most known for their performances at the opening night gala of the National Black Theatre Festival.

Those who knew Saleh describe him as a kindhearted individual who touched everyone he came in contact with.

When word began to surface of Saleh's untimely passing following a sudden illness, dozens took to social media to send their condolences. County Commissioners Fleming El-Amin and Tonya McDaniel and community activist Khalid Griggs referred to Saleh as a cultural icon.

City native and local attorney Nicole Little wrote, "A wonderful spirit that I'm blessed to have connected with over the years. From Authoring Action to my West African Dance Class at Wake, you left a footprint in our hearts forever."

During Saleh's celebration of life on the campus of Winston-Salem State University on Dec.

8, there was an energy throughout the room that seemed to take hold of everyone. As you would expect when celebrating the life of an icon, this was no ordinary memorial service. Performances by Otesha and others kept spirits high throughout the evening.

Although it's clear that Saleh's legacy will live on through Otesha and the dozens of people he positively influenced over the years, his image will live on as well. A giant image of Saleh taken by local artist Owens Daniels hangs in the Benton Convention Center. In the picture, which is part of Daniels' Birth of the Cool project, Saleh seems to be engulfed in flames while playing his drum.

When discussing his relationship with Saleh, Daniels said, "Seeing his pictures shared makes me miss him all the more. I loved who he was and love just knowing him, I became a better me. Thank you, brother Hashim, thank you."

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