

BLACK HISTORY

New program seeks to create brighter future for young Black men

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

In honor of the late Rev. Carlton AG Eversley, several organizations have joined forces to create a space where young Black males can access the tools they need to become successful and productive adults. Eversley, who died in 2019, was the longtime pastor of Dellabrook Presbyterian Church and well-respected throughout the community as a warrior for social justice who was always willing to stand up for those in need.

Eversley Little Village (ELV) was created to keep that legacy alive.

ELV, which was created through a partnership among Action4Equity, L.I.T. City, Triad Restorative Justice, and TURN,



Submitted photo
Eversley Little Village was created to keep the legacy of Rev. Carlton AG Eversley alive. Eversley was the longtime pastor of Dellabrook Presbyterian Church.

began as a tutoring/remote learning program for students, but has grown into much more. According to their website, ELV serves as a “place-based, trauma-informed, community-driven interruptor that impacts both educa-

tion outcomes and multi-generational economic mobility ... by providing culturally relative and data-driven, individualized developmental and academic support.”

At a place in time where racist practices and

systems that have hindered progress for African Americans are being brought to light, one of the goals of ELV is to break that cycle by creating a place where young men can go to learn how to sustain hope, accountability

and pride in culture.

Each of the boys in the program will be connected with community leaders and programming that will follow them from 6th grade until graduation. Upon completion of the program, a community-wide rites of passage ceremony will be held to transition ELV Boys to ELV Men.

To support the program, ELV will combine transformative organiz-

ing strategies and parent advocacy utilizing Search Institute’s Developmental Assets Framework, which has identified 40 positive supports and strengths young people need to succeed.

ELV is currently enrolling boys in middle school living in or near the Rolling Hills community into their inaugural program. For more information visit www.elvnc.org.

Book

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eight years, because it allowed me to really hone in on exactly how I wanted the book to be written and the look of it.

“I cannot thank Keith Hobgood enough. He is the illustrator from Out of Our Minds Studios, and he is the illustrator that really brought the book to life in a really magical way. He even put little hidden messages in the actual illustration so that even though the dad isn’t in every illustration, there is a piece of him in each illustration. He really took the words and made the book come to life and I am so grateful to have worked with him.”

Even as a well-known public figure in the community, it was difficult for Vickers to find a publisher for her book. Being a first-time African American female author writing a book about a young Black boy and his father made some publishing companies hesitant about the book.

“Some people will look at me and say, ‘that was easy for you, because you are a public figure’ and actually it’s not,” she said. “I think that people don’t realize that just because you are on television, or just because you do a lot of community service and people may know your name doesn’t mean that they’re going to be so willing to help you publish your book.”

Vickers says there are many “gatekeepers” in the book industry and she found out the hard way when she attempted to send letters to agents about her book. She found that just being a public figure was not enough to entice agents and publishing companies to her book. Through hard work and dedication, she chose to

self-publish her book.

“I went the route of self-publishing because I found there were so many gatekeepers in this industry that do not believe in the books of our stories, the stories of our lives, the stories of our own voices,” she continued. “They don’t believe there is enough of a big market out there for our books to have a Black child on the cover.”

Vickers emphasizes the point by telling a story that told her they liked the story and the book, but asked if she could lighten the skin color of the child. She vehemently refused.

Throughout the eight years Vickers worked on the book, she kept it a secret from her brother and nephew. Once she finished the book, she sent her brother a copy in the mail as a surprise. Her brother was overjoyed to have Vickers express in print the emotions he has had to deal with every time he has had to leave his family.

“When he got it in the mail, he sent me a text message and he said, ‘I just received your package, I can’t talk right now, I’m only up to the third page and I am in tears,’” she said about her brother reading the book for the first time. “That for me was so powerful, because I gave it to him as a gift just to let him know that even in those quiet moments when we were apart and we couldn’t be together, I felt your pain and love and wrapped it up in a book.”

Her nephew echoed the sentiments of his father. He was happy that she was able to show how hard it was as a child to endure having your father leave to serve his country.

Vickers is a firm believer in getting more Black authors on the shelves of book stores, schools and libraries. She feels the best

way to accomplish that is by having the Black community support Black authors. Currently her book has been fast tracked by the Forsyth County Library system and is on the shelves of every library in the county.

It was intentional for Vickers to bring to light what the men and women of the armed forces have to deal with when they leave their families for deployment. She knows her brother and nephew are not the only ones dealing with this issue, so it was a hope that other families could benefit from the book.

“A lot of times we see the big happy reunion when they return from overseas, but we don’t often hear the backstory, we don’t see the struggle, the tug of war or the crying nights of the child laying in bed wondering, where is my dad,” she said. “That is often lost on so many people. It was lost on me until I saw it once my brother joined the Army.”

“I have such a profound respect for service men and women, because what they do and what they give up and the families that serve a special mission of their own and what they do and what they give up in order to keep all of us safe, it is beyond profound and it is critical that we recognize and support them. I wanted to make sure people on the outside, or civilians, to understand there is so much more beyond the happy reunions and the tearful goodbyes.”

Vickers plans to have more books in the near future that will include other branches of the armed forces, as well as for little girls.

For more information about “Why My Hero Had to Go,” visit www.talithavickers.com.

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