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Ebony Group Is Developing 'Idea And Dream'

By Linda Florence
Post Staff Writer

The Ebony Group and Company, Inc., a theatrical group in Charlotte, was an idea and a dream only two and a half years ago.

But today the group is holding popular performances throughout the Charlotte area.

The most recent performance was held in June at UNC-C and sponsored by a local nursing organization.

The Ebony Company has performed at night clubs such as the Afternoon Delight in Greensboro; The Savoy in Mooresville; the first annual Black Arts Festival in Raleigh and appeared on WRAL television in Raleigh on a program called Ebony Exposure.

In addition to this, the group tours with a play entitled God's Trombone and has done the performance at more than 30 churches in the Charlotte area.

The group grew from a need of more theatrical outlets for blacks in the area; and was started as a training ground for young blacks "who had a sincere interest in the arts," according to its co-founders.

And it was because of this need that Willie J. Stratford Jr. a Charlotte native and Sandra McMullen a native of New York turned an idea into a reality - the creation of the Ebony Company.

Ms. McMullen and Stratford both in their early 30s and both being interested in acting, happened by chance to meet at a local talent agency.

After talking, they realized that they both had similar ideas and they expressed the frustration of the limited theatrical outlets for blacks.

"I'd been trying to find someone in Charlotte who had the same interest that I did," Ms. McMullen explained.

When Ms. McMullen arrived in Charlotte five years ago she brought a wealth of theatrical experience with her.

She started dance lessons at the age of two. She major in Art Education and Drama at Morgan State University in Maryland. She'd studied with theatrical companies, had private lessons, attended semi-professional schools and "did some off Broadway stuff."

"So we were just sitting around one evening and said let's do our own play," said Stratford who's less theatrical experience but was big on talent and ideas.

"I was in a live show before I'd ever seen a full stage production," Stratford said. "I was doing a part in the Charlotte Little Theatre," he said.

It was at this time in 1974 that Stratford first became interested in acting.

"Most of the plays (being done in the Charlotte area at that time) were for people with Jewish or white backgrounds, and blacks usually got minor roles even if they were capable of doing more," Ms. McMullen said.

After deciding to start the group, Stratford contacted Nathaniel Rorie, 30, a long time acquaintance and Charlotte native who'd had more of a directing and technical background in drama.

Rorie, began taking drama courses at West Charlotte High School. He took drama courses at A&T State University in Greensboro, worked with the Summer Stock Theatre in Charlotte, did stage management while in the U.S. Army and also helped start the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Youth Council Community Players.

The three got busy doing research to find out what needed to be done to start a group.

They began working to incorporate the group, they needed to be incorporated to be a non profit organization. The first step was to elect officers.

"Well, Rorie wanted to be the director, Sandy (Ms.

See Ebony on Page 11

Willie Stratford Jr.
...interested in the arts

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District Three Meeting Set For July 27

The District Three Meeting will be held on Thursday, July 27, at 7 p.m. at Cavalry Baptist Church, located on Ashley Rd. just off Wilkinson Blvd.

Republican Mitchell Grant and Democrat Sydnor Thompson will be on hand to give their views on district representation, what it means to each of their parties, and what it means to the city of Charlotte.

Belinda M. Stinson is the chairman of the Community of District Three.

Spencer Thompson is the chairman of the District Three Committee.

"10" Supporters Respond To Charges

The National Wilmington 10 Defense Committee leveled sharp criticism against the N.C. Parole Commission and Governor James Hunt's office charging them with "political trickery" and "game playing" following statements made by these officials to the press alleging a public lack of interest in the freedom and parole of the remaining incarcerated defendants of the Wilmington 10.

In letters sent to these government officials, the Committee asserted that the many thousands of letters Governor Hunt has received over the past several months indicated "the desire that they all be released..by any means possible." The letters also indicate that, "At no point has any one person been singled out for distinction" by Wilmington 10 supporters. "The total group is innocent of their charges--the public is demanding the freedom and exoneration of the total group."

Ms. Kazana, Coordinator of the group requested that the Governor's office share those thousands of letters received by them with the Parole Commission as indication for public support for the parole of defendants who are nearing eligibility stating that, "These letters do apply to everyone." Ms. Kazana also promised the Governor's office that failure to free the remaining defendants in an expedient fashion will only "serve to level continued negative criticisms of the manner in which North Carolina government continues to conduct its affairs."

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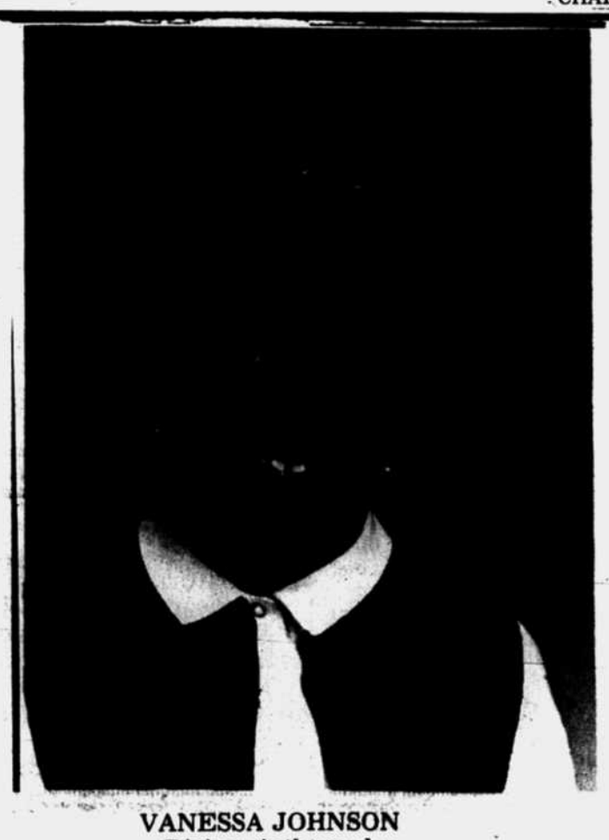

VANESSA JOHNSON
...Rising sixth grader

Vanessa Johnson Is Beauty Of Week

Prolific Vanessa Johnson is the Post Beauty of the Week.

A rising sixth grader at Landrum Junior High School in Houston, Texas, Vanessa was born in Charlotte on April 23, 1967.

She attended Our Lady of Consolation Catholic School and Oaklawn Elementary School in Charlotte, and Ridgecrest Elementary School in Houston.

At age 11, Vanessa is already career-minded and has narrowed her choices down to two. "I plan to be a model or a lawyer," Vanessa affirmed.

Vanessa has made many accomplishments during her elementary years. Among them are awards in track events, an award for outstanding schoolwork, a medal for music, and a medal for patrol. She also has been an active participant in Sigma Gamma Rho events for a period of time.

Vanessa moved with her family to Houston, Texas last year. Within that year she was a participant in a spelling bee in which she received another award.

Vanessa has a younger sister (324 days younger to be precise), whose name is Courtney. They are spending the summer in Charlotte with their grandmother, Mrs. Mentzie Johnson of 3216 Tate St.

Vanessa is one of the girls of Mr. and Mrs. William Johnson.

In Chapel Hill

Democrats To Party

The Young Democrats of Orange County are sponsoring a "Party for Democratic Unity" on Sunday, July 23 at the Mad Hatter restaurant in Chapel Hill. The event will begin at 3 p.m. and continue until midnight. The purpose of the event is to unite Democrats behind John Ingram, Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate. Ingram has confirmed his presence in the early evening.

Among the other party notables expected to be in attendance are Rufus Edmiston (NC Attorney General), Jane Patterson (representing Betty McCain, NC Democratic Party Chair), and David McKnight (former candidate for the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate).

Entertainment will be provided throughout the day by area performers including Artemis (4 talented Greensboro women), belly dancer Karen Krall, and Night Shift. Pat Patterson, star of Fundermotz records will serve as emcee from 3 to 6 p.m. In addition, Rufus Edmisten is expected to sing, and David McKnight will play some down-home fiddle.

Donations of $3 will be collected at the door

Public Housing Is Financed By People Who Live There?

Main Burden Falls On Residents

By Eileen Hanson
Special to the Post

Who pays for public housing? "The federal government," some say. "The City of Charlotte," respond others. In the end, most of us think "the tax-payer always pays."

Wrong on all three guesses. Public housing is financed for the most part by the people who live there, mostly people on low and fixed incomes.

According to Director of Management W.H. Draddy, the current Charlotte Housing Authority (CHA) budget is subsidized only 8-10 percent by the federal government. There are no local or county subsidies. The main burden falls on the residents themselves, through rents and fees.

"We have rent ranges that are designed to produce an income to operate our projects without subsidy. This is the goal all housing authorities are required to strive for," said Draddy. "Until we reach that goal, we get some federal subsidy."

"Draddy refused to say that there is a minimum rent a tenant must be able to pay to get into public housing. In theory, no one is too poor. But according to Linda Winston, Assistant Superintendent of Tenant Selection, the minimum in Charlotte is now $60 a month, which she says is also the amount needed to maintain a housing unit. Residents rents are fixed at 25 percent of their adjusted annual income.

As many as half of the 900 families currently on the waiting list for public housing are in effect "ineligible" because they can't afford $60 a month.

Some have been waiting three or four years or longer. Down from 1500 families a few months ago, the list has just been through its annual "purge," dropping families that are no longer interested or eligible.

A Cherry resident, who asked to remain anonymous, was one of those who waited six years before recently removing herself from the list. "I was just disgusted with the whole situation. They said I was too poor to be in public housing," she said. A couple of years ago CHA said she could not pay the then-required monthly rent of $40, but the woman was paying twice that, $80 a month, in private slum housing. The CHA said her income wasn't enough to be able to pay even $40, according to their federa-

See PUBLIC on Page 11.

Registration Deadline Set For Drink Vote

The county-wide liquor-by-the-drink election will be Friday, September 16. There will be no absentee ballots. The registration deadline is August 10. Polls will be open from 6:30 a.m. til 7:30 p.m.

Those who are eligible to vote are citizens of the United States, those persons 18 years of age or over, a resident of North Carolina for at least 30 days, and persons convicted of a felony whose citizenship rights have been restored.

Persons who have not registered in Mecklenburg County before, have moved from one precinct to another si

Persons who have not registered in Mecklenburg County before, have moved from one precinct to another since a previous registration in the County (it is a violation of the law to vote in your old precinct after 30 days(, wish to change party affiliation, have had a name change or been removed from registration files for failure to vote in four consecutive years, need to register, transfer or re-register.

Registration or transfer registration can be done at 45 permanent locations in Mecklenburg County year-round: at the Board of Elections Office, 710 E. Fourth St., Monday-Friday, from 8 a.m. til 5 p.m., phone 374-2133; at any of the 16 public libraries during regular hours, phone 374-2724.

MRS. POLLY WILLIAMS WITH
...Assistant manager Elwyn McCall

Ms. Williams Helps McDonald's Complete Successful Drive

By Linda Florence
Post Staff Writer

Polly Williams of 1411 Onyx St. has helped the Freedom Drive McDonalds restaurant successfully complete its month long family Reunion Drive.

Mrs. Williams is the official hostess of the McDonalds restaurant on Freedom Drive.

McDonalds, in conjunction with United Airlines, sponsored the promotion. Anyone could register as they entered the restaurant. A name was drawn from the entries everyday from each of the McDonalds across the nation during the 28 day period.

There are 15 McDonalds in the Charlotte area.

Each day a persons' name was drawn the person could bring his immediate family members in for a free meal at McDonalds on Sunday afternoon.

But at the end of the drive last Sunday afternoon a grand prize winner was drawn for each restaurant. Th grand-prize winner at the Freedom Drive restaurant was Don Deese of Mt. Holly.

Deese will be able to fly any two family members from anywhere in the United States. The flights are being furnished by United Airlines.

Mrs. Williams had a customer, Robert P. McKendrick, who just happened to be in the restaurant, reached in the box of entries and selected the winner.

As official hostess, Mrs. William does volunteer work in the community, handle McDonald tours and is in charge of promotions such as the one completed on Sunday.

"Polly is a dear person. She gets along well with everyone," said Elwyn McCall, assistant manager at the restaurant. "She meets no strangers," he added.

"I really love my work," Mrs. Williams said Sunday.

Mrs. Williams has worked as the official hostess of McDonalds for four years.

City Of Mooresville To Contribute To Martin L. King Memorial Statue

By Debra Stanley
Post Staff Writer

The city of Mooresville has pledged to contribute the proceeds of a fund raising drive to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Statue.

In a meeting with Rev. James Barnett, chairman of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission, Mayor Joe V. Knox stated that he would give the first donation in Mooresville, and asked all citizens of the city to do the same. Rev. Barnett will appear before the Mooresville City Council on August 7 to received their endorsement.

There will be a meeting within the next few days of the leaders of Mooresville. Plans will be made to involve the city as a whole. August 13 has been set as the day that Mooresville will make their report.

"We're just a small city, you know, but we have always done our part to help in a good cause," said the artist's sister, Mrs. Miller, of Mooresville.

Rev. Gamble, who has a Gospel Program on radio station WHIP, will help in the drive by playing records by Dr. King each Sunday morning from 9-10 a.m. "I feel that Mooresville should be a part of this drive since Dr. Burke is from Mooresville," said Rev. Gamble. "There is no way to talk about the statue in years to come without calling Mooresville's name," Rev. Gamble commented.

Dr. Burke was chosen to do the life-size statue of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to be placed in Marshall Park. She has received $15,000 to date and will receive an additional $30,000 when the statue is complete.

Rev. James Barnett
...Committee chairman

A business committee, headed by Joe Martin, has pledged to raise at least $20,000, of which $5,000 has been raised so far.

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission was formed in November of 1977 by former Mayor John Belk. Appointed to the commission were Rev. Coleman Kerry, Mrs. Wesley Clement, Dr. J. Matthew Murphy, Larry T. Black, and Rev. James Barnett.

The appointment was made after a group headed by Rev. James E. Palmer and Rev. James E. Barnett lead an unsuccessful fight to get the city to re-name Beatties Ford Rd. in honor of Dr. King.