

Diversion keeps families together

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Of the hundreds of women with children incarcerated each year, at least half have one or more children destined for foster care. Most of these kids face separation anxiety disorder, learning challenges, and become delinquent in school.

"Summit House is a program of hope," said Sutton. "It is a program that addresses the abuses that women have faced in their lives and puts children first to be able to keep a family together and not tear kids away from their moms and stick them in foster care. We collectively work to heal the family as a whole."

For the women of Summit House, the program is not only a second chance, but usually a last chance. "We are not a secured prison. The program is voluntary

and the women are free to go if they choose to, but they have to face the consequences of that decision. That consequence usually means permanently losing rights to their children."

Summit House focuses on the transforming power of a mother's love for her children. Devonda Black, 24, says it was the love of her unborn child that made a difference in her life. "When I got pregnant with my second child, I knew I had to change my life," she said.

As a teen, Black had trouble coping with the death of her biological father. She began acting out and hanging with the wrong crowd. After a probation violation, she was facing jail time. In lieu of incarceration, Black came to Summit House. She now lives in the home with her school-aged son and newborn daughter.

Black said she experience

has made all the difference in her life. "As a kid, I was too sheltered," said Black, who said she was raised in the church. "There was a lot I didn't know about relationships and life in general."

Summit House gives women the structure they need to make better decisions. The program provides mental health and substance abuse treatment, parenting skills, educational coaching, after care, and employment skills.

"They teach us to make the right decisions for our families. They help us get an education. They teach us about relationships and the consequences of [sex]," said Black. "A lot of things that I didn't know. Now I have goals."

Black said that although her goals are going to be harder to reach because of her criminal record, she now realizes they are not impossible.

"I keep God first and my dreams first."

The women of Summit House are a diverse group. "Substance abuse knows no color or ethnicity," said Sutton. Women range in age from 18-28 and come from

all types of backgrounds. Some come from affluent homes, and others come from poverty.

Summit House began 20 years ago in Greensboro. In 1995, homes opened up in Charlotte and Raleigh. The program has tracked all its graduates and has a zero percent recidivism rate.

The Charlotte chapter currently has four bedrooms with two families in each room. Summit House is in the process of renovating a new home. With the help of Price Waterhouse Coopers they are restoring a 10-bedroom home on UNC's campus. This will allow each family to have their own room and PWC is furnishing a playroom for the children.

"We are growing," said Sutton. "We are providing opportunities for more women to heal themselves and break the shackles of abuse and addiction."

Organizers are asking volunteers to help in the June 8 renovation of the new home at 10929 Bonnie Cone Lane off Mallard Creek Church Road. To volunteer or make a donation, go to www.summithousecharlotte.org or call the office at (704) 334-4423.

Historic life-saving station resurrected

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Freedom Coalition, and Dellerva Collins, a Manteo town commissioner who died in November 2005, were behind those efforts.

The Town of Manteo paid for the cookhouse's exterior facelift. With donations, community volunteers like Berry, Austin and at least a dozen others have done the rest.

"We're trying," Berry said, pausing from his work for a moment. "It's come a long way. It really has."

Last week, flooring had arrived but hadn't gone in; Austin and Alton Hardy of Manteo worked on the trim on the other side of the 483-square-foot building. They were determined to get the work done by the end of the week so the museum would be ready for the pictures, paintings and artifacts on loan from the National Park Service.

There's an old telephone, its workings inside a wooden box with two bells; a rusted compass with an attached kerosene lamp used on the beaches; a telescope that still shines; a faded breeches buoy; a worn canvas stretcher; flares and a little brass flask that held gunpowder; a megaphone; and signal lanterns.

The 60 men who made up the Pea Island crew from 1880 to 1947 saved at least 200 lives, Scott said, plucking men, women and children from stormy seas and sound. They were strong and dedicated and respected, living a remote and perhaps lonesome life.

You can't really put their contributions into numbers, Scott added, not if you think about all those who were born and touched because of the lives they saved.

"These men did the job and they did it extra well," she said, "and they did it without recognition."

MLK statue returns to Rocky Mount park

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The \$58,000 statue, paid for mostly by private donations and created by Erik Blome, was placed in the park in 2005, but drew complaints that it didn't resemble King.

City officials removed the statue, which has remained in storage since then. Another sculptor, Steven Whyte, was commissioned to make a second statue. Funding fell through, however.

Two weeks ago, the city council was asked to put the Blome statue back in the park. The board agreed, and a small group watched Wednesday as workers hoisted it on its pedestal.

Malton Anthony, a regular park walker, initially said he liked the "new" statue. But his reaction changed when he learned of the statue's origins.

"The same one?" Anthony said. "I think that's a bad idea - it's a symbol of a black man, not Martin Luther King."

"If you're going to put something up, put something up that looks like him."

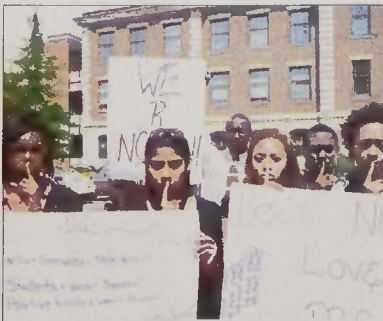
Donell and Marilyn Lewis, however, were pleased that the statue was back.

"It's great - it suits everything out here, especially to have it up in a park named after him," Donell Lewis said. "It looks straight to me; it looks nice."

Council members Andre Knight and Reuben Blackwell, who voted against putting the statue back up, said the city needs to move on to other issues.

"The majority has spoken," Blackwell said. "I'm moving on to economic development and trying to bring life to our city."

SILENT PROTEST AT N.C. CENTRAL



TRIANGLE TRIBUNE PHOTO/SOMMER BROKAW

N.C. Central University students staged a quiet campus protest last week over the ongoing interview process for the university's next chancellor. The students are particularly upset that current Provost Beverly Washington Jones is not among the three finalists.

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