

Black community leaders

Leaders focus on welfare of all people

By Kathi Keys
Staff Writer, The Courier-Tribune

Randolph County's black community has plenty of leaders — individuals, young and old, who are making a difference through the organizations and churches with which they are associated.

Some names may not be familiar, but their efforts have left a mark in Randolph County.

They're humble about what they have done and are doing.

But they are very quick to mention the names of others who are making a difference, mostly behind the scenes.

The Rev. Charles Tyson

The most visible leader in Randolph County is the Rev. Charles Tyson, the first black chairman of the Asheboro City Board of Education.

But race is not an issue with him. After being elected chairman by fellow board members in December 1999, he dismissed any discussion about race by saying, "I'm the chairman who happens to be black."

Tyson is a retired minister, with a lot of his work involved with prison chaplaincy. He's currently serving as president of the Asheboro Lions Club and as a counselor for the Salvation Army.

And, in his soft-spoken way, he has been elected to the city school board by Asheboro citizens — from all walks of life — for two six-year terms. He has served as a board member since 1991.

Kate Jones

Kate Jones, 91, says she has plenty other projects on her agenda "even though it's late in the afternoon."

The retired counseling psychologist is a past president of Randolph County Democratic Women and Randolph Black Caucus. She has been dean of women at N.C. A&T and worked for the YMCA in New Jersey, being recognized at the White House by President Harry Truman for her YMCA work.

Jones returned home to Asheboro nearly 30 years ago and has kept on working in her community — at Strieby Congregational United Church of Christ, where she plays the piano and is a deaconess and trustee, and with the George Washington Carver Community Enrichment Center. She has been a key contributor to "The Heritage of Randolph County" publication and in the first edition wrote about the county's black history.

In 1998, Jones received the

better things," she says about LAIR.

Making a difference

Two black women have been named Citizens of the Year by the Asheboro/Randolph Cham-

ber of Commerce — Addie Luther in 1992 and the Rev. Dora Atlas in 1997 — for their contributions to the Randolph County community.

Atlas, a retired minister, is best known for The Daily Bread soup kitchen which recently moved into new quarters in Asheboro.

"She's concerned about the welfare of all people," Jones says about Atlas; others were quick to mention Atlas as one of the community's leaders.

Luther's community contributions have been varied, but include the East Side Improvement Association and refurbishment of parts of the former Central School. At the time of the award she was described as "color blind in dealing with people of all races."

Businessman Leo Luther, Addie's husband, has served on the Asheboro City Council.

The Luthers' son, Jimi Luther, has been mentioned by many as one of tomorrow's leaders. (See separate story on Jimi Luther in this Profile edition.)

Rashidi Zalika, formerly known as Richie Everette, has been an advocate of the black community through his involvement with the Asheboro/Randolph Branch of the NAACP. He's now president.

Katie Snuggs actively works with many organizations, many of them helping youth.

The City of Asheboro public works department employee is active in assisting abused and neglected children through Randolph County's Guardian Ad Litem program and is a lifetime member of the board for

the Family Crisis Center.

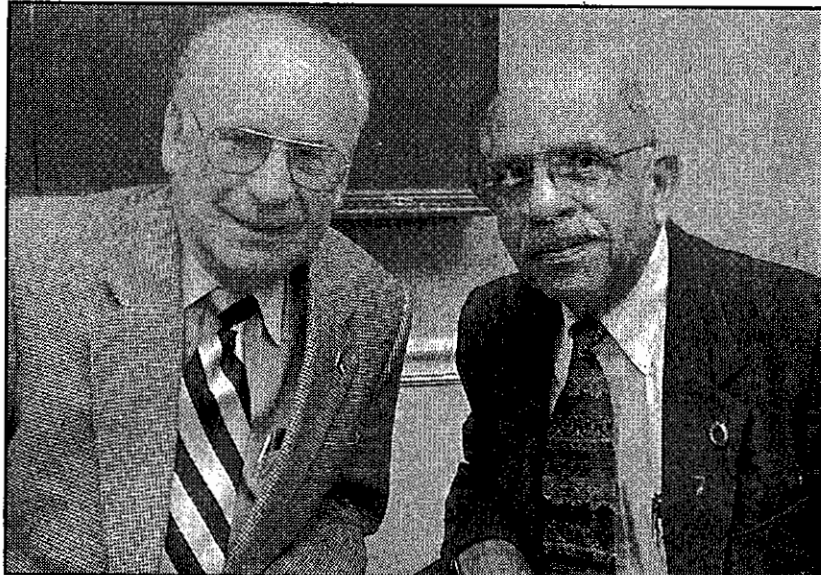
"It's a real high to walk out of a courtroom when our job has made a difference in a child's life," she recently said about her volunteer role as a Guardian Ad Litem for the past 10 years.

for many youth — black and white — in the Asheboro schools, first at the former Central School and now at North Asheboro Middle School.

Murphy has been an educator for more than 40 years and has coached basketball, football and track. His students and the community have honored him at past functions because of his contributions as a role model.

There are others in the education field, most visible being Pat Foust who became Randolph County Schools' assistant superintendent for instruction last year after serving as principal of Southeastern Randolph Middle School.

There are leaders in the religious community — like Bishop Barney Trogdon with Church of God of Prophecy, the Rev. John Butler with Wesley Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, the Rev. James Curry with Mitchell United Methodist Church and the Rev. Dexter Trogdon with Look to Jesus Christian Center and a former police officer, just to name a few.



Clifton Hughes / The Courier-Tribune

SCHOOL BOARD CHAIRMAN — Charles Tyson, shown here with Representative Arlie Culp, left, is the most visible black community leader. An active member of the community, he is also the chairman of the Asheboro City Board of Education.

'If people would find out what it's about, the community could come together.'

— Helen Gaines-Settle about GWCCEC

ment Center.

He has written several dramatic presentations, including a musical documentary about local heroes. He's now a drama teacher at West Montgomery High School.

McNair has been helping set up activities for local youth, including trips such as to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center in Atlanta.

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Unifying the community

Clyde and Betty Foust, business leaders, are actively working to make the George Washington Carver Community Enrichment Center (GWCCEC) a reality. They own Foust Corp. and are partners in Gales Funeral Home.

Clyde Foust is president of the GWCCEC board of directors and also serves on the Western North Carolina Commission on Race and Religion with the United Methodist churches.

It's this center which Betty Foust hopes will be the "umbrella" which unites the entire black community by providing a centralized location — a community center — as a central focal point.

Another unifying force could be the opening of a Boys and Girls Club in Asheboro and eventually other Randolph County communities for local youth — a project receiving the support of local folks like Addie Luther.

An Asheboro Boys and Girls Club is expected to become a reality by the Memorial Day weekend this year — just before school ends June 2 — initially at the former Central School gymnasium.

"There certainly should be more supervised activities for teens," Luther says about providing a countywide unifying force. "There is no place now."

Many admit that there is not currently a unifying force. Citizens are loyal to their churches and respective activities.

Most blacks live in Asheboro, but others are residents of other Randolph communities such as Ramseur and Seagrove.

"We need to come together as a unit ... we have a lot of leaders here with very good ideas," Betty Foust says. "Everyone wants to go forward, but we need to do it as united."

In 1998, Jones received the Randolph County Chapter of the NAACP's Service Award which recognized her years of hard work and dedication for the cause of civil rights. At the time she was called "the Rosa Parks of Randolph County."

She is humble about her contributions and talks about many others.

"We need to stimulate more people to want to do more rather than being noncommittal," Jones says. Taking leadership from the black community to the county level "has to come from community concern. The people of the community need to get behind it ... the little people need to give a push."

She's proud of the work of the LAIR club (Leadership Action in Randolph) which began in the late 1970s to help local youth. The retired teachers and other professionals provide scholarships and help counsel youngsters in the black community. Ann Leach is the current president and past presidents include Kate Jones and Adelaide Hodges.

"We hope to do bigger and

Some names to remember

Harvey Boone, the former head of the Asheboro-Randolph branch of the NAACP, picks five leaders he believes have an influence today in the black community and five to keep an eye on in the future:

Today

Kate Jones

Retired

Relentless passion for justice. Not even her age has stopped her from being active.

Rev. James Curry

Pastor

He's a Erudite with a common touch. He's been up close and directly involved in the civil rights movement. He champions the rights of those least recognized. Pastoring three churches hasn't stopped him.

Chuck Egerton

Teacher, Randolph Community College

He is not afraid to take a stand on social justice, issues relating to people of color and the right of African-Americans.

Gloria Whack

Retired

Very astute and articulate. She is one of the brightest stars of the NAACP.

Muhammed

Rawzan Elehi

Tomorrow

George

McCormick

UPS Supervisor

Has the potential and fortitude to become a viable voice in the black community.

Lauri Williams

Attorney

Has the potential to be a viable and effective advocate for women and minority issues.

Ben Bell

Physical Therapist

Very active in community projects.

Helen

Gaines-Settle

Coordinator

Tireless fight against drugs in Asheboro and Randolph. Very active in church circles.

Marjorie Roach

RCC Small Business

Has made inroads and impact in a very short time. Has spoken at and been involved in many community-