

# NORTHSIDE NEWS

## A Voice for Community: Remembering Ms. Velma Perry, 1920-2019

Hudson Vaughan, Executive Director of the Jackson Center, spoke these words at the funeral service for Ms. Velma Perry on July 8, 2019

The Jackson Center’s motto is, “Without the past, you have no future.” Ms. Velma embodied this more than almost anybody I’ve ever met. In fact, I’ll never forget my first town council meeting with Ms. Velma. Ms. Velma got to the microphone and started, “Now you all need to know some history.” She wanted every council member to know that when they voted on a development moratorium and changes to protect the neighborhood, they weren’t just voting on a current issue. She wanted those investors sitting in the audience to know they couldn’t get away with this. This issue had history, and that history was deep and challenging. She finished by claiming something like: “And now, you have a chance - will you support the black people who have been here for centuries, or will you let us be pushed out of the town we have built?”



Ms. Velma lived in her same home on Lindsay Street for 98 years. Living 98 years is remarkable; living 98 years in the same home is unheard of, except with Ms. Velma. Can you imagine how well she knew this place? She saw this neighborhood change drastically, but she didn’t sit by and watch change. She helped define it, fight for it, make it better. She fought for noise ordinances, trash rules, conservation districts – anything and everything that would help preserve its dignity. She fought well into her 90’s and inspired many of us younger people to see that our voices could make a difference.

And she was an exemplary neighbor, always greeting people from that expansive porch. Ms. Keith Edwards once said that there is a difference between a house and a home: a house is bricks, wood, a structure. A house becomes a home when the people in that house represent a sense of community, a sense of belonging, a sense of kinship. Ms. Velma helped define home for so many of us. We so need neighbors like Ms. Velma who ground us in what real community looks like, who share the history of a place, and who defy “market forces” to stay in that place for—and for the benefit of—generations.

As most of you probably know, Ms. Velma had a beautiful voice. In recent years, Ms. Velma could not remember the words to songs anymore, but she would grab our hands and, in that stunning operatic tone, she would sing. Ms. Janie—her constant caregiver and companion—sang along and cheered her on. The words no longer mattered when Ms. Velma sang; she had the Spirit. This is what we can hope for most: that if what remains at the end of life is the deep spirit of faith, the blessing of communion with neighbors, and the ability to break into hymns we have sung our whole lives through, we will know we have truly lived a beautiful life just as Ms. Velma did.

In Memoriam

**Ms. Shirley Pendergraft Davis**, a life-long Northside neighbor, passed away on August 4. She was 74 years old. Ms. Shirley was born on Merritt Mill Road, went to Northside Elementary, was a drum majorette, and played numerous sports and instruments at Lincoln High. In a 2014 oral history interview, she said: “If there was something to get into, I was in it.” In high school, she got involved in the Civil Rights movement and participated in sit-ins on Franklin Street: “I was interested in what was going on. I lived right by St. Joseph’s church, and so if they had something going on, I was going to be over there.” Always a fearless voice for social justice, she was arrested multiple times and spent time in prison for civil disobedience. To hear more about Ms. Shirley’s remarkable life, listen to her oral history interview at [archive.jacksoncenter.info](http://archive.jacksoncenter.info). A Celebration of life took place on August 10 at First Baptist Church.

**Ms. Lena Mae Atwater Paylor**, known to many as “Mother,” passed away on August 3, 2019. Born in Durham in 1934, Ms Lena was a member of Hickory Grove Missionary Baptist Church where she served faithfully in many capacities. A devoted wife to the late Herbert Paylor, she had two children - Linda Fearington and Devon Paylor - and leaves behind four generations of legacies. According to her loving family, “Her soft spoken voice but straight forward words would encourage you to do the right thing. She said what she meant and meant what she said.”

**“We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives.”**  
-Toni Morrison

September Birthdays

9/4- Alison Swaim

9/6- Cory Jones

9/14- Joe Alston

9/16- Janeria “Nissie” Riggsbee

9/17- Charles Booth

9/24- Stephanie Barnes-Simms

9/29- Jane Farrar

Student Service Partnerships

The Marian Cheek Jackson Center wants to give service-minded students and Chapel Hill residents the opportunity to work alongside local neighborhoods and help sustain the spirit of Beloved Community! Come join us as a Service Partner this fall! Stop by at 512 W Rosemary St., or go to [www.jacksoncenter.info](http://www.jacksoncenter.info) and click on “Get Involved” to find out more.

A group of six young people, three men and three women, are posing for a photo outdoors. They are all smiling and looking at the camera. One man is wearing a white t-shirt with “KIDS R KID 2016” printed on it. Another man is wearing a grey t-shirt with “Lucky” printed on it.

Last Friday, we celebrated the end of July with a Porch Revival Tour stop hosted by Tai Hunyh, a UNC student and Northside Neighbor who lives on Church Street!

If you are interested in hosting your own stop on the Porch Revival Tour, please get in contact with the Jackson Center! 919-960-1670 or [jacksoncenter.info](http://jacksoncenter.info)

**Need help maintaining your property?**  
**Contact Kathy Atwater, Community Advocacy Specialist @ (919)-960-1670**

Ask Keith

Q: Ms. Keith, I am very concerned about race relations due to racial tensions in our community and throughout the world. I live in the Northside area which consists of people from every walk of life. What are the Jackson Center, the town, or any organizations, doing to bring people together so that we can stand as one and let each one of us know that we count? This is very important to me because of my children.

A: The Jackson Center mission has always been about bringing people together across racial lines and economic backgrounds.

In August, in the spirit of meeting your neighbors, is partnering with your neighbors at 603 Bynum St for a front porch get together on Friday, August 30th from 6-8pm. Food will be provided.

In September, when our university family and newcomers who have recently moved to our community are here, we will be starting the new academic calendar year off on a really big positive note! There will be a community togetherness celebration at Hargraves Community Center. The Community Cookout, formerly known as the Neighborhood Night Out Block Party, will take place Thursday, September 19th from 5:30-8:30 on the baseball field of Hargraves Community Center. It will have a lot of focus on togetherness. Burgers, ice cream, and other food and beverages will be provided. Everything is free! This event is sponsored by the town, university, Empowerment Inc., Jackson Center, and other agencies. This is a unity event so please attend.

Please check your local churches, town and county government websites, and university Daily Tar Heel for other upcoming events that are being put together as we speak. We will notify the community as soon as we know.

Thank you for this very important question!

**A Della-Bration Party**

**Food\*Toast\*Performances**

**August 25th 512 W. Rosemary Street**

**@ 3:00 p.m.**

**Celebrating 10 years Della Pollock’s of Jackson Center Leadership**



# Meet The Jackson Center Summer Fellows

Each summer the Jackson Center offers up a few summer fellowships to UNC students who have a passion for honoring, renewing and building community. They bring lots of skills and interests to the table and into the neighborhood, and this year was certainly no exception. Just a few days after starting their summer fellowship, Wyatt, Anna, Diana, Kayla, Veda and Saradine (pictured below) were able to witness the power of community at a meeting at Hargraves about a planned development at Amity Station. From that day to their last day, when they all pitched in at a Porch Revival cookout on Church Street, they learned what it means to be a Northside Neighbor. Here are some of the impressions they are leaving with:

By **Diana Nayeon Koo**

This summer, I helped plan the 2019 Good Neighbor Initiative (GNI) door-to-door walk and Community Cookout. Working on the GNI made me reflect on my experience living off-campus for the past three years. In 2016, I was having a loud argument on the phone, and one of my neighbors called the police to tell them about yelling coming from my house. And I have been to parties where the neighbors have called the police to report excessive noise and disruptive behavior. Fostering relationships between students and residents makes students more conscious of their impact on the community. It also encourages people to communicate with their neighbors to handle conflicts instead of involving the police.

By **Wyatt Woodson**

The way I was taught to be a leader in school was to make a habit of putting yourself in the center of attention. The definition of leadership I accept now is compassion-in-action, regardless of scale. Leadership is being brave enough to wave hello, to know when to listen, to stick your neck out when people you love need help, when your community needs help. Leadership is putting in the work to live actively in a community. I hope wherever I go, I will always be able to come home to that wisdom that has been taught to me in the words and actions of people in this Beloved Community.

By **Anna Patterson**

As I reflect on my experience as a Jackson Center Summer Fellow and begin to imagine what the next chapter after graduate school will be, I am reminded of a quote from author and theologian Frederick Buechner. He writes that one’s vocation is “where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” My work with the Northside Neighborhood Initiative allowed me to explore my interests in affordable housing and health, while helping with efforts to ensure that this community’s historic residents can age in place in a supportive, diverse, intergenerational community. I am deeply grateful for this experience.



*“I tell my students, ‘When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else.’”*  
-Toni Morrison

By **Kayla De Honiesto**

I think one of the hardest parts of activism is not knowing how much impact I can really ever have. I wonder about how much power I have against the powerful tides of gentrification. How does my role as a student play into understanding and connecting to the community around my institution? Sometimes the impact and change I would like to make in the world around me seems too big for a tiny person like me to manage. I think we can look to Northside, where justice and activism flow through the blood of almost every long-term resident, as an example of what community-based activism can accomplish when everyone is invested in the fight against gentrification.

By **Saradine Pierre**

As a student living in Northside, it was easy and comfortable for me to only be in the company of my friends. What’s hard is putting yourself out there, knowing that that kindness may not be given in return. However, it is those difficult actions that build and strengthen community. By opening yourself up to others, even with a simple wave and a smile, you create an environment that allows for beautiful new relationships to blossom. My fellow summer fellows have showed me what it means to be a part of a community and I am forever grateful to them for prompting me to be a better Northside neighbor.

By **Veda Patil**

This summer I was immersed in and exposed to community organizing at a level I hardly anticipated coming into this space. I expected this summer to be a continuation of my prior work as a Bonner Internship, but I gained a lot more than I bargained for—including the friendship of five amazing other Fellows. Between planning for greater student service partner engagement and working to manifest a vision of a service oriented neighborhood, I had the great privilege this summer of being in an environment that made those lofty goals and visions not only achievable but well within reach.

**Coming Soon: Mark Your Calendars!**  
**Thursday, September 19, 5:30 - 8 PM**  
**2019 Good Neighbor Initiative Community Cookout**  
**Hargraves Community Center**  
**216 N Roberson St.**  
**Free BUNS AND BEN & JERRY’S**  
**Join the fun and festivities!**

## P.P.K.L. (Parents Preparing our Kids for Learning)

For anyone interested in helping kids to be successful in school...  
JOIN US as we talk about how to be a strong advocate for your child.

**WHEN: September 14, 2019, 11am -1pm**  
**WHERE: Hargraves Community Center | 216 N Roberson St.**  
**FEATURING: Speakers, community support, a book drive and more!**

Sponsored by the Jackson Center Community Mentor Team &  
St. Joseph CME Church Missionary Society

# Graduation News!

—CLASS OF—  
**2019**



Sunset Drive resident, **Ed Murray IV**, graduated this May from UNC Chapel Hill with a Bachelor’s in Sociology and will pursue a Master’s Degree at the *UNC School of Social Work* this Fall.

The newly formed Lincoln High School-Chapel Hill High School Joint Alumni Association presented its first round of annual community service awards to three local recent high school graduates on Sunday. **Corinna Johnson, Nicole Bell and Matthew Atisa**, all of Chapel Hill-Carrboro, received \$1,000 awards at a celebration luncheon at Nantucket Grill in Chapel Hill, on Sunday, Aug. 4. The three, who will use the award money to help defray college expenses, were honored for volunteering their time to help bring about racial harmony in their communities.



**Elodie Deneassembaye**, a resident of Gomains Ave, graduated from Chapel Hill High School in June. Elodie received several scholarships and is going to Queens University of Charlotte! She will be the first woman in her family to go to college!!!