

NORTHSIDE NEWS

Onwards and Upwards into 2023!

Why do we share about our work? 1. To keep neighbors informed and connected to events and opportunities. 2. To highlight the contributions of community members and other partners who make this work possible. 3. To keep us accountable to the community we serve. 4. To make people smile when they see themselves or someone they know in a picture. 5. Because we’re proud and excited! -Diana

Celebrating 2022 Jackson Center Highlights

Public History

2022 was a busy year for the Jackson Center’s public history program, putting Mrs. Jackson’s motto, “without the past, you have no future,” into action in the community. Here are a few highlights:

- In February, we celebrated the one year anniversary of From the Rock Wall, our digital showcase for local Black history (www.fromtherockwall.org), which now houses 364 oral history interviews and nearly 500 still images documenting the histories of Northside, Pine Knolls, Tin Top, and other historically Black neighborhoods.
- Thanks to our interviewing team and partnerships with the Southern Oral History Program and UNC Libraries, we added over two dozen oral histories and scanned hundreds of photos and documents for From the Rock Wall.
- Our Community Review Board (CRB) hosted our second annual Community Cinema event in partnership with the Chelsea Theater in June where we showed *Al: My Brother*, a documentary about civil right activist and attorney Al McSurely. Mr. McSurely and the filmmaker Cash Michaels were able to join us for Q&A sessions and we had a full house for one of the events!
- In August, the CRB hosted a community pool party celebrating the history of A.D. Clark Pool and Hargraves Center. People shared their stories of learning to swim at Hargraves, serving as lifeguards, swimming in creeks and sneaking into UNC pools before the pool at Hargraves opened, and more.
- In the fall, we began planning for three new gateways, similar to the Freedom Fighters Gateway at the corner by St. Joseph CME Church. The new gateways will honor the contributions of the community’s Black builders, teachers, and faith leaders. We began the process of holding community design meetings to plan the gateways and started conducting interviews about the proud history of Black builders in preparation for the first gateway.
- We rounded out the year at the Jackson Center’s holiday party, where the CRB provided treat bags containing apples, oranges, candy, and nuts just like the ones that were handed out by many churches in the community in years past.



Residents gathered at the A.D. Clark Pool Party

In 2023 we will be hosting a teacher professional development workshop for Chapel Hill Carrboro City Schools educators in January, holding our third annual community cinema event, and hosting a second annual pool party. We also look forward to more oral histories and supporting the community in designing three beautiful new gateways to celebrate community history.

Housing Justice

2022 was a marvelous year for housing in the Northside, Pine Knolls and Tin Top neighborhoods!

- We added four new families to our beloved community through the sale of four land bank properties!
- We served 31 residents through our wills clinic, working with UNC Law Students and pro bono attorneys!
- We conducted two Keeping Your House A Home Workshops where 25 residents learned about home maintenance to prevent larger issues.
- We partnered with the NC Energy Association to teach residents how to conserve energy and gathered information regarding resources available to help cut the cost of expensive repairs.
- We submitted 15 home repair applications to the Orange County Preservation Coalition, partner organizations that are contracted to do home repairs
- We provided property tax assistance to 43 residents and assisted them with their applications for the Orange County Long Time Homeowner Assistance Program. We were also blessed with a generous donation through which we were able to help four residents catch up on their back taxes!

Our vision and mission to help our residents stay in their home was accomplished, and we count this as a win not only for the Jackson Center but also for our neighbors by retaining those who desire to live in this beloved community! We’re celebrating our long-time and new neighbors who love the neighborhoods of Northside, Pine Knolls, and Tin Top, and are excited to maintain the legacy of this vibrant place we call home; living close, connected and proud!!!

Learning Across Generations

In 2022, the Learning Across Generation (LAG) education program accomplished three main goals.

1. We organized the second annual Sankofa Freedom School, a summer program where students learn about local Black activism and organizing
2. We led workshops on local Black history and civil rights education in 41 classes across 5 schools
3. We strengthened existing partnerships and built new relationships

The 2022 Sankofa Freedom School focused on local history and organizing with workshops on environmental justice, organizing power, personal voice, and local change-makers. Youth leaders connected with local powers who told the stories of movements like the Rogers Road community fighting for their right to environmental justice. The powerful history of Chapel Hill’s legacy told through historian Ms. Danita Mason-Hogan’s storytelling. The impact of local trailblazers like Pauli Murray.



Freedom School students in front of the Pauli Murray mural.

We shared the stories of local Black communities in classrooms all across the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools. Students learned about intersectionality, factors that determine whose voices are highlighted and which narratives become dominant, and the power of local farmers.

This would not have been possible without our community partners: the Chapel Hill/Carrboro Boys and Girls Club, Southern Vision Alliance, Activate! IFC, student service partners from UNC’s Education 615 classes, the Town of Chapel Hill Teen Center, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro NAACP, and more!

Aging in Community

The Aging in Community team supports 3 projects: the Northside Residential Fellowship (NRF), LINKing Generations Across Northside (LINK), and the Triumph of Mutual Care Initiative.

The Northside Residential Fellows are students who live together in a home in Northside and actively participate in community events, Jackson Center work, and mentorship pairs with elder residents. The LINKing Generations in Northside Program engaged the NRFs and other UNC students in community engagement, learning opportunities, and active advocacy in the Northside community. Each student is paired with a resident mentor who they build relationship with over the course of the year. The Triumph of Mutual Care Initiative is focused on bringing care and elder support to the Northside community, particularly for those who are caring for elders at home.

These initiatives are intertwined and have been supporting each other through various activities that include:

- Meetings with NRF and LINK participants to discuss the work of the MCJC, how to engage the community, and the interests of the Northside community.
- An Aging in Community Meeting in September that included NRF, LINK, and their neighbor partners to get more input on how to move forward with 308 Lindsey St (Ms. Velma Perry’s house) as part of the Triumph of Mutual Care initiative.
- Planning meetings with community partners to discuss the future of 308 Lindsay Street and its potential use in supporting elder care and aging in community. Student engagement has been helpful in gathering information and perspectives about this project from evidence and neighbors.



LINK students, Partnerships in Aging coordinators and Ms. Louise Felix

LINK meet-and-greet between students and resident mentors

Traditions Bridge Communities Across Time

A recent staff meeting at the Jackson Center began with the idea that we should look to the past to envision the future. The central theme that emerged from this conversation was “tradition.” For some, tradition can be an off-putting term that seems as if it is opposed to change or growth. I remember as a kid we would say something was “old fashioned” if it had any amount of age, despite it still being useful. The elders would respond that it simply “had character.” Today, I chuckle when my own kids gently tell me something is “old school” meaning “time-worn.” However, I’m convinced that traditions exist and will continue to exist because they offer so much if we want to understand how we can see and live into our future.

The holiday season from Thanksgiving to New Year’s allows for us to reflect on the many traditions that we engage in, often without seeing them as rituals. These are the special things that we do, often as a family, around the holidays, that seem to make the holiday special because we do them. What are those things that your family does this time of the year that just seem to happen as part of Christmas and New Year? You know, the ones that bring a smile to your face, a twinkle to your eyes because they are simple, even “old-fashioned.” When I approached a few of our Northside neighbors about holiday traditions, I could see their smiles or hear the excitement in their voices. Mrs. Jane Farrar shared: “Christmas Eve was when we would bake a cake, cut it into slices, and put it out for Santa Claus. Santa Claus would take the cake slices and leave cookies for the family.” Mrs. Jane indicated that the cake was always chocolate, her favorite, as she was the oldest girl in the family. I joked with her that her family was very kind to Santa because in my house we only left Santa some cookies and they were store bought. She smiled and shared her family’s greatest tradition was to go to church on Christmas day, no matter what day of the week on which the holiday fell. “Wow!” I exclaimed. “So did my family.”

Mrs. Louise Felix shared that growing up in Northside, her family’s routine was to get up early on Christmas day, bathe, and eat a good breakfast. “The kids would play a while until we would sit at the table and discuss how Christmas was really about how we were blessed as a family. Around 1 p.m. or so, we would all go to Graham Street to my grandma’s house for a family celebration. There we would gather with the other children and exchange gifts.” Mrs. Louise remembered that her dad always cooked the Christmas meal and there was so much she had to be thankful for. “Christmas was a time to thank God for saving my life!” she said matter-of-factly. I needed to hear that reminder that Christmas isn’t about toys or presents, but really the gift of family and community. Mrs. Louise shared that in many ways she sees that as the work of the Jackson Center, continuing to build and care for the Northside community.

“Christmas dinner was the highlight of our celebration” said Ms. Odessa Wilson. Her mother was one of a family of nine who took cooking seriously. The Christmas dinner get-togethers would rotate annually but they always included chicken and dumplings, special desserts, games, and activities. As she was speaking, I couldn’t help but hear the O’Jays singing “Christmas just ain’t Christmas, without the one you love – and Ms. Odessa’s chicken and dumplings. She snapped me back to reality when she said that the highlight of their gathering was that they always considered those less fortunate and would sponsor a family in the community so they would also have a meal and dessert. Again, I heard the echoes of valuing the community that you are a part of. I ended our time without asking her a very important question so I’ll pause to do it here: “Ms. Odessa, can a brother get that chicken and dumpling recipe?”

I spoke with Ms. Eva Barnett but first I had to apologize for missing her birthday. She reminded me that on November 5 she turned 95 years young. I told her that my parents had indeed raised me right but to pray for me so I don’t miss another birthday. She chuckled and then shared: “My father had an old wheelbarrow that he would fill with straw. He said it was a manger.” She remembered that the children would always be outside playing around the manger unless it was cold and they would remain inside. “Our dinner always had turkey, dressing, potato salad, collard greens, and peas. The parents would also drink a “Locals” beer” she said. Wait, did she say collard greens? Lord knows I love some collards, especially after the frost, when they seem to taste better. As I was still thinking about the collards and if they tasted better with beer, she said that they celebrated what she called a “shoe-box Christmas.” I was unfamiliar with the term, so I asked her to explain. She responded: “We didn’t have a lot so our gifts would have to fit into a shoebox. We didn’t have a lot but we were thankful and happy.” I thanked her for her time as I texted my wife to get two shoeboxes for our kids.

These stories that were graciously shared with me emphasized that traditions matter, but most important is the sense of community. Ms. Eva spoke for the community in saying “We all had a good time because we were all there together.”

As I reflect on these stories, and you hopefully on your own traditions, I know that we will continue to build the Northside community. That smile on your face or twinkle in your eye guides us to the future ahead. Tradition, what some might call “old-fashioned” is not opposed to growth or change. Bye for now, I need to respond to my wife’s text message about what are we going to do with shoeboxes. I thought it might be Ms. Odessa coming through with that recipe.

Michael Jones, Jackson Center intern from the Masters of Divinity School at Duke University

Holiday Greetings For Mrs. Charlotte Register

Submitted by Rudolph S. Jackson

Christmas and the New Year holidays are in full view, but 97 year old Charlotte Register of Chapel Hill has seen many changes in the city over the past 77 years. With continuing concerns about COVID-19 and the flu and assorted viruses, vaccinations and face masks are now a part of everyday life for many of us.

Mrs. Charlotte, as she is called by those who know her, will celebrate her birthday in February. She still resides on North Graham Street in Chapel Hill where she has lived for many years. No one from her old neighborhood would recognize what was once a small African-American community with unpaved streets. Mrs. Charlotte relocated from Moncure, North Carolina just south of Chapel Hill, and later married her late husband Albert (Redo) Register. It is here that they raised three lovely daughters.

But for Mrs. Charlotte, family time and holidays such as Christmas have had added meaning for her as she explains what it was like living in Chapel Hill, a university community. Like many other places in North Carolina, there were the underpinnings of a segregated South. However, at that time many saw the city as a little village and a welcoming place to live. Residents both black and white developed lasting friendships and strong ties to the city. Yet, the city of Chapel Hill underwent several important political and social changes during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. This was a challenging time for everyone, including her three little girls who helped to integrate the city school system.

In the face of these dramatic changes, she jokingly points to the fact that she was born during a Leap Year, February 29th, and based on her count, she is only in her twenties. She insists that there are still many things yet to do in Chapel Hill. Close family members, including her grands and great-grands around the country agree that spending time with Grand Mama Charlotte continues to be a singular event to cherish. When she speaks of her three little girls, however, she says that they are ‘grown and gone,’ with two of them holding PhD degrees from UNC-CH, and the third a registered nurse. In all likelihood Mrs. Charlotte Register will spend her 98th birthday with family and wonderful memories of Chapel Hill while staying close to home.



In Memoriam



Mrs. Tolisha Rena (Headen) Alexander
January 23, 1974 ~ November 10, 2022



Mrs. Veora Lillian (Hackney) Atwater
February 8, 1936 ~ November 5, 2022



Mrs. Ola Mae Cinderella (Farrington) Harris
March 27, 1936 ~ November 4, 2022

January Birthdays

- January 6 - Vimala Rajendran
- January 8 - Hudson Vaughan
- January 14 - Lillian Alston
- January 21 - Clarence Farrar
- January 21 - Dennis Farrington
- January 23 - George Barrett
- January 26 - Cortland Gilliam
- January 26 - Kathryn Wall
- January 30 - Minister Willis Farrington

Apply for the
2023-2024 Northside
Residential Fellowship!

The Northside Residential Fellows are three UNC students who live in Northside during the year in a house held by the Landbank and are actively engaged in community relationship building, celebrations, and work with the Jackson Center. This year’s students - Jill, Ayah, and Julie - have been jumping into the work. Julie has been assisting in working with the community and staff to organize a vision of elder support at Ms. Velma Perry’s house. Ayah has been learning about Chapel Hill’s Freedom Movement and developing a workshop centering Black women and the importance of relaxation, and Jill has been creating materials for matchmaking with potential homeowners to attract new families and build a vibrant, diverse, multigenerational, and vital community!

Jill and Ayah will be returning next year to the NRF house, but we are recruiting for a third roommate! If you are a UNC student who is interested in community building and learning about and engaging with elders, while supporting the work of the Jackson Center, reach out to ryan_lavalley@med.unc.edu for more information.