

The Northside Festival is Back!

April 27, 2019, 8:30 a.m. I show up at the Jackson Center to help set up for the Northside Festival. It's my first event in Northside. Hundreds of people, but I only recognize my friend and a few staff members. After I finish serving food, I grab a plate and walk around, not sure where to sit. An older neighbor sees me and offers me the seat next to him. I'm not going to pretend to remember what we talked about, but I remember being happy that I had someone to talk to. I walk over to the activities, and I see a table covered in fabric. I meet Mr. David Lyles, who is now one of my favorite neighbors, someone I always look forward to seeing at every event (he'll be manning the craft table again at this year's festival!). I cut out a heart, and Mr. David adds it to the community quilt, a big tree with all the patches people have made. The quilt now hangs in our front office, the first thing I see when I walk into work. - Diana Koo

Northside Festival Throughout the Years



History of the May Day Festival

The Northside Festival has its origins in the May Day celebrations at Lincoln High School and, before that, Chapel Hill's Orange County Training School (OCTS). May Day festivals appear to have originated as a celebration of the return of summer in medieval Europe (if not before!) and were widely celebrated in American schools and communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. May Day was especially popular in Rosenwald Schools established in African American communities, like OCTS.

May Day celebrations at OCTS and later at Lincoln High School were much anticipated and joyfully attended, and the schools used May Day as a fund-raising event. Parents came to see their children perform and the whole neighborhood turned out to celebrate the season. Fred Battle remembered, "You'd be surprised at the number of people that would come out [for] May Day, May first every year...it was an activity that brought the community together again...everybody felt like they were a part of it."

May Day celebrations featured games like sack races, running races, and baseball or softball games, as well as dances, performances by students from different grades, the crowning of a May Queen, and the wrapping of a may pole. For example, in 1957, the Lincoln High School May Day program featured stunts from the athletic department, a procession, the crowning of the May Queen, a series of dances tying to the "Around the World" theme for that year, an American flag drill, a performance by the Lincoln Twirling Corps, the wrapping of the May Pole and a softball game.

Every year, the festival crowned its May Queen, usually a high school senior who was attended by a court of other high school girls and other younger girls from elementary school. The queen and her court wore white dresses and were celebrated in a procession around the grounds of the school led by the marching band. In 1951, May Queen Barbara Campbell was given "a lovely waffle iron" as a prize!

The queen and her court oversaw the wrapping of the May Pole. Colorful ribbons were wrapped around the pole by dancing children toward the end of the festival each year. Esphur Foster remembered, "I got a chance to wrap the May Pole and I was just thrilled to death...the boys wore black pants and black shoes, and the girls had to wear white dresses with a satin ribbon and so your socks had to be the same color as your satin ribbon and black shoes. And so we practiced and wrapped the May Pole and it was just absolutely gorgeous.



Pictured above are the May Day Queen, Carrie Alston, a senior and her attendants. If you are in this photo or know someone in the photo, let us know!

Northside Fete

We'll meet at the corner
Rosemary and Graham
We'll climb up the hill
Walking hand in hand
We'll stomp and step
We'll run, then rest
Giving you our Northside best
We'll blow big bubbles
We'll laugh away our troubles
As we sing and speak our smile's double
We'll learn new names
We'll play old games

We'll relax on the low stone wall that remains

We'll plant our seeds
We'll massage our soil

Serve the fruits of our labor to all who have toiled

We'll recline in the shade
We'll sit in the sunshine
The breeze you'll feel on your skin is divine

And no neighbor
On this day shall labor

Unless it's to move to the rhythm of the song that they favor

Our hearts and feet
Match the Drummer's beat
As we sway and pray in our beloved streets

So don't be alarmed
And don't be afraid
If you do happen to dance away
The entirety of this lovely day
We have all these activities interlaced:
Chef's kiss is that food you taste
Beautiful queen with the painted face
Chasin' a bag to win that Sack race

Hopp'n in a brown pillowcase
Jump rope n' Hoola hoop
Draw n' paint

Create all which is beautiful until the sun's rays grow faint
And the outline of the milky moon begins to rise
As the golden light floods your eyes
Celebrate and commune with lives you want to magnify

At Northside
Our people and our stories
Step inside you and see
So listen and look at UNC
Through the eyes and ears of this community
"Without the past, you have no future"
Without the future what is the past?

by Ty Chapman

This poem appeared in the 1957 Lincoln High School Newspaper:

May Day was a wonderful day. Everyone had fun until the day was done. We danced and played games to entertain. The day was so nice and fair. We thanked our teachers for helping us to prepare. The may pole was beautifully done. I know the children had lots of fun. If I never live to see another May-Day, God knows I enjoyed this one best of all. Aren't you glad you didn't fall? "I guess this is all."

Ms. Rashii Purefoy, Director of Ebone Soul Strutters

Ms. Purefoy is a lifelong resident of Chapel Hill and grew up in the Northside Community of Chapel Hill. The Ebone Soul Strutters, of which Ms. Purefoy is the Director, was formed in 1970 at Hargraves Center by Mrs. Lillie Allen and Dr. Linda Kerr-Norfleet. The original name of the group was the Soul Strutters. The group was formed because most of the African American parents could not afford to send their children to the dance studios that were in downtown Chapel Hill. The African American Community was very supportive of this idea. After Mrs. Allen and Dr. Norfleet’s departures to pursue other careers, Ms. Purefoy was hired in 1978 by Mr. Fred Battle, the Director of Hargraves at that time. The group started with young girls ages 13 and up and after Ms. Purefoy became Director, the age was extended to include girls from 8 years old through high school. Ms. Purefoy developed an interest in dance herself at a very young age. When she was in elementary school, she and her brother were involved in the dance portion of the plays at the historic Northside Elementary School. Later, Ms. Purefoy had the opportunity to dance under the directorship of the renowned Dr. Charles ``Chuck’’ Davis.



Ms. Purefoy's own children joined the Soul Strutters dance group in 1970 at the Hargraves Community Center. The group was the first modern dance group for youth and adults in the community. Ms. Purefoy not only teaches dance, but she is also a mentor to the young girls. She says most of the children now are being raised by their grandparents who do not always have the funds to purchase their dance attire. Ms. Purefoy is constantly pursuing ways to help purchase leotards and tights for those who are not able to purchase these themselves.

Ms. Purefoy has been Director of the Ebone Soul Strutters for over 40 years and when asked what keeps her coming back, she says, “the love of dance and seeing the joy of the children,” keep her motivated. Ms. Purefoy says she tries to teach the children to be respectful to each other, to respect themselves, and their elders. Today, the group consists of male and female students and has evolved into a modern and African dance group which serves this community and surrounding areas with performances throughout the year.

Ms. Purefoy was recently nominated and received the 2022 Jan Allen Award presented by Chapel Hill NOW.



Ramadan Mubarak!

During Ramadan, Muslims worldwide fast from sunrise to sunset. Folks are unable to eat or drink (even water) and practice balanced behaviors during the hours of their fast. To break fast there is a small item eaten (usually dates/fruit and water); then folks pray maghrib and have a meal to end their fast, called an iftar. There is both beauty and blessings in breaking fast with someone.

The Marian Cheek Jackson Center, the UNC Muslim Student Association and the Chapel Hill / Carrboro NAACP collaborated in hosting an interfaith community iftar on Thursday, March 30th. There were about eighty attendants from different communities and faiths standing together in this celebration. The event had fruit and water for folks to break their fast, space for maghrib prayer (with a local imam leading), a halal iftar offered and then a space for conversation. During prayer, there was an interfaith conversation from folks of different faith paths discussing the ways that folks of the Bahai’, Muslim, Jewish, Christian and other faith paths partake in fasting.



Ask Keith!

I have never been to the Northside Community Festival. What is the purpose of it?

Hello everyone,



I hope everything is going well in your lives. I know you haven’t heard from me in a while, so let me tell you I’m glad to be back answering your inquiries. To answer the question, the Northside Festival started as a gathering of many people who live in the Northside community to reconnect with one another and have a lot of fun. The gathering became so popular with not only the Northside community but people from other communities in the Town of Chapel Hill and Carrboro. The gathering progressed into a full-blown festival for all. It is a fun time for people to reconnect with lifetime community members, new members, and for hosts of others who want to forget about life’s problems for a few hours and enjoy themselves.

Every time I attend the Northside community festival, I feel as if this is the way that life is supposed to be. With people from every walk of life gathering together as human beings reaching out to each other with love and understanding. We need this all over this world. If this is your first time attending, I hope you can walk away feeling the same way. We welcome all.

Since this is a free event, the Jackson Center will be providing hot dogs, drinks, and other foods. However, the Jackson Center asks that if there is anyone who wants to volunteer or donate food for the festival, it would be greatly appreciated! They have aluminum pans. You can stop by their office at 512 W Rosemary St. to pick one up before April 27th. You can bring your pan when you come to the festival, the earlier the better!

Our entertainment this year will be outstanding, and they can’t wait to entertain you! Kudos to the Jackson Center and all those who are organizing or participating in this event. Security will be provided.

Love to all, and if my health permits, I will see you at the festival!

Ms. Keith Edwards

Holmes Child Care Center

As the children of the Holmes Child Care Center enjoy their Easter Egg Hunt, they may not realize the rich legacy that they are a part of. Many of their parents and grandparents were once students at this very venue!

The Holmes Child Care Center has been a critical institution in the Chapel Hill community for 79 years! The Northside and Pine Knolls communities, especially those in the second and third generations, have grateful memories of attending this childcare center. It was the only facility accessible to African American families for many years.

Originally called the Holmes Day Care Center, this facility opened on July 1, 1944. Harold Holmes, the organizer, devotedly led the efforts to create this day care center, and accomplished this through the support of fundraising events such as dinner sales and grants. This was done in an effort to provide with a safe and welcoming place for children with early learning while families worked.

Addie Robinson, a registered nurse, was the first director, providing leadership and guidance for over 30 years. Sallie Pendergraft later took over as director and staff member for 25 years. The current director, Alethea J. Alston, has provided dedicated leadership for more than 25 years.

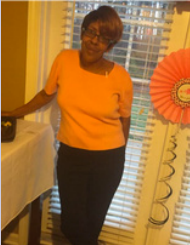
The Holmes Childcare Center has always been an essential component of the Northside and Pine Knolls neighborhoods. Since its founding, its central location has remained unchanged at the Hargraves Recreation Center.



Congratulations to the Holmes Child Care Center on 79 years of exceptional service to the Chapel Hill Community!

Ms. Jakini Adisa

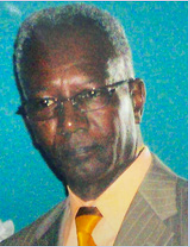
In Memoriam



Mrs. Pamela Annette (Campbell) Ratliff
January 7, 1956 ~ March 4, 2023



Mrs. Annie Pereatia (Faulcon) Parrish
September 16, 1948 ~ March 6, 2023



Mr. Lewis Milton McCrimmon
October 22, 1938 ~ March 9, 2023



Mrs. Lula Bell (Suitt) Norwood
January 25, 1932 ~ March 20, 2023



Coach Thurlis Jimmy Little, Jr.
January 8, 1943 ~ March 24, 2023



Mrs. Betty Jean (Hatley) Bright
May 29, 1942 ~ April 1, 2023

May Birthdays

May 3 Janie Alston

May 3 Cleo Caldwell

May 6 Diana Koo

May 7 Valerie Foushee

May 17 Garland Foushee (105!!!)

May 18 Kay Gattis

May 19 Richelle Watson

May 24 Josh Davis

May 29 Jennette Farrington

May 30 Donnie Hollywood

Riggsbee

May 30 Gladys Pendergraph-Brandon