

Rocky Mount TELEGRAM

Patillo alumni host annual event

Tuesday, April 30, 2019

“My Soul Is A Witness” of “The Importance of Self-Care.” These two events were the topics of A Winter Gathering held by the W. A. Pattillo Alumni Association at Edgecombe Community College.

These events were absolutely extraordinary and outstanding. The association hosted these events as a fundraiser for the association’s Scholarship Fund.

The association’s mission is to consistently support student education in Edgecombe County schools and to enhance opportunities to expand collaboration on behalf of the children. The association interfaces annually with all the schools of Edgecombe County through its Scholarship and Incentive Award Programs.

Pattillo Middle School and Princeville Elementary School are the association’s “adopted” schools. Part I of A Winter Gathering featured an In Lecture-Recital by Leroy Bynum Jr., an acclaimed lyric tenor. Bynum, a native of Tarboro, currently resides in Portland, Ore., where he serves as dean of the College of the Arts and professor of voice and opera at Portland State University.

He attended the former W.A. Pattillo High School and graduated from Tarboro Senior High School in 1972. Bynum holds performance degrees from the University of Georgia, the University of South Florida and UNC-Chapel Hill. He has also earned several performance certificates nationally and internationally.

Bynum melodiously made the audience forget about the cold and wet conditions outside with his superb performance of “My Soul is a Witness: Spirit and Spirituality” in the Songs of America’s Slaves. Bynum’s performance was a perfect way to recognize and celebrate Black History Month.

Part II of A Winter Gathering opened by welcoming everyone to the association’s Fourth Annual Fellowship Brunch. A brunch meal was enjoyed by everyone along with program participants from students of Pattillo Middle School, Princeville Elementary School, Edgecombe Early College High School, Pretty Sweet Bee Mentoring Program, the Step Team of Pattillo Middle School and the Djembe Rhythm African Dance Group and Drummers. Beautiful artwork was displayed from art students of Edgecombe County Public Schools and an African Art Exhibit provided by the family of the late Robert Whitehead. Community vendors from Finance, Edgecombe County Memorial Library and Naturoil were also present.

Herbert Exum, also a native of Tarboro and a 1967 graduate of the former W.A. Pattillo High School, was the keynote speaker. Exum received an undergraduate degree in psychology from Federal City University in Washington, D.C., and completed his master’s and doctorate degrees in counseling and student personnel psychology at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minn. He is an author and professor emeritus. He has an extensive career nationally and internationally.

Exum humored the audience with some of his memories of waiting to attend school, former teachers when he was a student at Pattillo and shared highlights of the year he attended school in New Jersey. He said it was a relief when he returned to Tarboro and graduated from Pattillo. The main emphasis of his speech was the importance of “Self-

Care,” constructing a “Self-Care Plan,” conducting a “SelfAssessment” and finally, making “Self-Care” non-negotiable.

This weekend of A Winter Gathering exemplified excellence, success, fellowship and most of all furthered support “for the children.”