

The University of
North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Communiversality

The Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History

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Lotticia Mack

Points of Interest:

- Check out the articles about our new Director and changes to CYP!
- Read about the components of Communiversality and their successful semesters!
- Be sure to check the announcements column for important information!
- Take a look at the events taking place at the Stone Center this semester!

A Letter From The Director...

"I believe that education is life and not just preparation for life. Without "real life" experiences, classroom learning alone can be artificial and irrelevant."

-Dr. Sonja Haynes Stone

Since its inception in 1992, Communiversality continues to gain acceptance as the cornerstone program for the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History. Through stable and dedicated student leaders, the program continues to fulfill the Center's mission of "community outreach and enrichment" by working to improve student performance through education and practical experiences.

The yielding success of Communiversality has resulted in a recurrent influx of volunteers, a waiting list of participants, and many invitations for collaborations from campus and community organizations.

When I accepted the position as Communiversality Director, I was in awe of the dedicated student leaders, counselors, parents, and after school affiliates. An African proverb states, "It takes a village to raise a child." Communiversality has adopted this concept, and with all who work together to ensure that the student experiences are enriching,

we have established that village.

The Program Coordinators Ebonie Leonard and Nikki Roberson have invested time and tireless efforts to ensure that the positive and powerful presence of Communiversality is felt throughout the UNC-Chapel Hill community. Without the undying dedication of our program coordinators as well as other members of the Communiversality team, the program wouldn't be where it is today.

Communiversality is also lucky to have site coordinators who work in collaboration with counselors to develop lesson plans that lure even the most reluctant learner into participating. The collaboration results in lesson plans that fulfill the need to expose participants to the culture, heritage and history of the African/African-American Diaspora. The lessons have ranged from African American contributions to space, which was introduced by a field trip to the Morehead Planetarium, to the Capeoria workshop that was facilitated by the Nego Gato Dance and Music Ensemble.

In order to ensure that our students have the tools needed to excel academically, the Homework Assis-

tance component of Communiversality incorporates technology, literacy, and one-on-one tutoring to assist students.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers has enabled Communiversality to resume at the Hargraves Center, and eventually at Carrboro Elementary.

As we are in the midst of the fall session, I am pleased with the continual success of Communiversality, and even more pleased with all who work together to guarantee that Communiversality flourishes and prospers. As a unit we are all able to work together to serve the cultural and academic needs of our students. Thank you for your assistance in this need.

Sincerely yours,

Lotticia M. Mack,
Communiversality Director

"People will forget what you say, they will forget what you do, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

-Maya Angelou

Meet Our New Communiversity Director, Lotticia Mack!

One pretty afternoon at the end of July, a call was placed from the Stone Center that would prove to bring great things to Communiversity: our new director was hired.

Lotticia Mack, a Burlington native, jumped into her position feet first. Mack had only been in her new office for one day before attending a retreat with other members of the Stone Center staff to plan for the upcoming year. Although brand new to the job, Mack accepted her new responsibilities immediately and got to work.

A former Fairfax County English teacher, Mack has always had a special place in her heart for children. “Ever since I could remember, I have always had a desire to enrich the lives of children,” she said. Before teaching, Mack worked extensively with Big Brother, Big Sister and also coached several step teams.

Her experiences both in and out of the classroom have helped take the Communiversity program to innovative new heights. Mack implemented Communiversity’s first pre-test for students, which was designed to assess the student’s reading levels before session began. The Bader Graded Word Tests were given to all Communiversity students during the first week of session, and once reading levels were established, counselors could more effectively help his or her student improve literary and literacy skills. “The word tests were an extremely effective and good idea,” said Program Coordi-

nator Nikki Roberson. “This is the first time that we were able to establish where we stood before session started, and this puts us in a much better place to address the individual needs of our students.”

Mack has also reached into her resource pool to find interactive websites for students to use during the Homework Assistance hour—if they don’t have homework. “I feel that it is important that students are exposed to different resources to assist with their academic growth,” she said.

The level of enthusiasm that Mack has brought to the program is not just seen by the students and her colleagues. Many of the site coordinators and counselors feel it as well. “We couldn’t have asked for a better director than Lotticia,” said Site Coordinator Allare Gas-kin. “Not only is she very resourceful, but she’s so easy to talk to and definitely loves the Communiversity program. We are lucky to have her.”

Any questions for Lotticia can be directed to her via phone at 919.962.9001, or email at lmmack@email.unc.edu.

New Semester Means New Changes for CYP

The fall semester brought about many changes for the Communiversity program, starting with the new face of CYP leadership.

With a new director, new program coordinators and a plethora of new site coordinators, Communiversity’s vision took a different approach for this year. “We were in a time of transition, but we have a great staff this year. Everyone works hard and we are having a great semester so far,” said Program Coordinator Ebonie Leonard, who was a site coordinator last year.

Another big change for the program was the structure of the on-site component. No longer a four day program, the component held at the Stone Center is now only three days—Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Communiversity Director Lotticia Mack said that one of the positives of having a three-day program is using Mondays as planning and meeting days. “Having that extra day to plan for session or meet with parents or

counselors is really helpful,” she said.

The resources available for Communiversity students have grown profusely with the arrival of our new director. While there were ample worksheets and a few books available to the kids last year, this year is completely different. Students have access to over 5,000 books thanks to the “America Reads” program, who graciously allowed CYP the use of their books. Also available are kid-friendly, academic websites for kids to use during Homework Assistance.

Finally, Parent Council meetings have been moved from Thursdays to Mondays. We hope and encourage all parents who can make it to please come out and attend.

CYP leadership hopes that these new changes to the program only help to make it the best that it possibly can be.

Cultural Literacy Has Big Projects For Fall Semester

Congratulations to our CYP September/October "Of the Months!"

Counselors of the Month!

Cultural Literacy & Homework Assistance:

Jenna Wilson
Alicia Frank
Eric Smith

Hargraves:

Whitney Frye

Students of the Month!

Cultural Literacy & Homework Assistance:

Ebony Tucker
Samantha Scriven

Hargraves:

Ahlaresha Carver

The Cultural Literacy component of Community, now separate from Homework Assistance, has done great things this fall.

The coordinators and counselors have proven to be very dedicated in exposing the Community participants to different aspects of African-American and African culture, history, and heritage.

The focus for this semester in Community has been math and science; students have participated in activities that utilized the power of numbers or provided information about different types of science.

The students spent a week learning about African American scientists, including Albert Cassell, Charles Henry Turner and Eslanda Goode Roberson. Students created buildings, designed their own insects, and made mystery colored beverages in order to get hand-on exposure to the works of the featured scientists.

In order to prepare students for the future, Site Coordinators Ashley Heilprin, Iman Kedir and Allare Gaskin created a lesson that focused on careers and money management. "The money management session was a lot of fun, and it got the kids thinking about what is most important to them in terms of money," said Heilprin.

Through the power of technology and television, the students have been able to take a virtual tour of Africa and explore the dynamics of plant and animal life on the continent. The movie *The Lion King* was used as well to identify the many facets of Africa.

Upcoming activities for the Cultural Literacy component include a visit by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, an African String Band; a focus on research and the inventions of African and African Americans; and a Science Fair to showcase what the participants have learned and created.

Homework Assistance Works To Improve Academics

This fall, Homework Assistance Site Coordinators and counselors have been hard at work ensuring that CYP participants complete homework and obtain the academic assistance that they may need. There are many resources that the enthusiastic counselors are able to use to better tutor the students in various subjects.

Books categorized by grade levels are currently used by counselors to help students with improving their reading comprehension and site-word recognition levels. The books will help the students improve literacy skills and the students will be tested periodically to determine how much progress has been made.

The participants have also been able to venture into the World Wide Web during session. Specified interactive websites have

been made available in all four core subjects, which are history, math, science and English. Students are allowed to play interactive games that are fun, but educational as well. These websites reinforce the lessons that are being learned within each student's classroom.

Site Coordinators Morgan Buck and Heran Medhin, along with their counselors, have made a whole-hearted effort to check each student's homework for accuracy. Since many students often finish their homework quickly, counselors

have access to binders that consist of math and English worksheets that are in accordance with the North Carolina course of study for each grade level.

Through the many resources that are readily available for all within the Community Youth Program, academic improvement and success is a guarantee.

"Using the Web is a good way for students to have fun and learn at the same time. We always have a number of students wanting to work in the computer lab."
-Site Coordinator
Heran Medhin

Hargraves Focuses On Hispanics and Africa

Team Hargraves has gotten off to an exciting start for the fall semester! The Hargraves component of Communiversy continues to meet every Tuesday and Thursday at the Hargraves Recreation and Community Center in Carrboro. Site coordinators and counselors work diligently to aid participants in achieving academic improvement and success through cultural diversity and homework assistance.

Dezyre Dennis and Alexis Carr, Site Coordinators for the component, adjusted the original Communiversy curriculum in order to accommodate the needs of both Hispanic and African-American fourth and fifth grade students and adjusted to highlight the accomplishments of both African-Americans and Hispanics in math and science.

Among other lessons, the students of Team Hargraves have studied the regions, animals, culture, and music of Africa. While learning about African music, students spent a day making maracas. "It is amazing how much the kids have learned about the continent of Africa. Dispelling the many stereotypes and misconceptions has been a rewarding experience." stated Carr.

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-Site Coordinator Alexis Carr**

In the upcoming weeks Team Hargraves will focus on African-American and Hispanic contributions to Space, Mathematics, and Scientific Research. "We're looking forward to having the students be involved in many more projects," Dennis said. "They are extremely excited about learning in Communiversy this semester and that makes us excited to teach them."

Our Dance and Drumming Workshop: Nego Gato Visits Communiversy!

On November 2, 2005 members of the Nego Gato Music and Dance Ensemble facilitated a workshop for the students of Communiversy. The workshop exposed participants to the Afro-Brazilian fusion of music, dance, acrobatics, and martial arts, better known as Capoeira.

Students actively listened as the ensemble played various Afro-Brazilian instruments, and the group even sang songs with the kids. The best part, however, was when it was time to get up and dance. Nego Gato showed CYP students series of movements and then let them dance with each other.

"The dancing was fun, especially when we had to get down low," said Ida Badgett, a 2nd grade student at McDougle Elementary

"I really enjoyed watching the students participate.



They were all excited and eagerly waiting their turn. I'm glad the Stone Center allows groups like this to come and participate with Communiversy. The effects are so positive," said Site Coordinator Heran Medhin.

After the hour was up, Communiversy students proudly thanked the quartet by presenting them

with a card that they all had signed and shouting a loud "THANK YOU!"

Upcoming Stone Center Events!

Please mark your calendars for the upcoming events at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center!

Thursday, November 17, 2005: Beneath the Underground Film Screening
Julia, All in Me and Nelly's Bodega

Come view two films, Julia, All In Me by Ivonne Belen and Nelly's Bodega by Omonike Akinyemi. The former explores the life and body of work of Puerto Rican poet Julia de Burgos. The latter is a film about the supportive bond between a 12 year old African-American girl and a twenty something Latina woman.

7:30 pm, Hitchcock Multipurpose Room, Stone Center. Free.

Friday, November 18, 2005: Black popular Cultures/Black Popular Struggles
Local Hip Hop Symposium and Performance

This event will include a panel discussion on the sociopolitical significance of local Hip Hop, several Spoken word performances, and a concert featuring area Hip Hop crew, Language arts. Among the panelists will be WNCU's Straight From Tha' Crate host, DJ Mike Nice, poets Dasan Ahanu and Kim Arrington, and student representatives. The discussion will be moderated by Dr. Perry Hall.

7 pm, Stone Center Theatre. Free.

Announcements:

The Parent Council has changed its meeting days! We now meet on every first Monday of the month, so mark your calendars! Parent Council meetings for next semester will be announced at a later date.

Please continue to make sure your student attends session and continue to pick your children up on time.

Sign out is a must!! If you are picking your child up early from Communiversity, please make sure that you sign your child out with a Site Coordinator.

Communiversity thanks parents for their hard work and dedication to the program for the year!

The last day of Communiversity for the fall semester is December 1. Please mark your calendars and plan accordingly.

The Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History



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We're on the Web!

www.unc.edu/depts/stonecenter

The Mission of the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History:

"To encourage and support the critical examination of all dimensions of African-American and African Diaspora cultures through sustained and open discussion, dialogue and debate, and to enhance the intellectual and socio-cultural climate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and in communities beyond the campus boundaries."

About Our Organization...

Communiversality, a cornerstone program of the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History, was created to honor Dr. Sonja Haynes Stone's dedication and commitment to educating young people in communities.

Communiversality's youth program is comprised of several after-school enrichment components, and is managed and run by University student volunteers, who teach and mentor participants and help them identify community resources. The program components educate, empower and expose participating community youth to various aspects of African and African American culture and history, along with other cultural traditions through alternative teaching methods.

Working in cooperation with other University departments, Communiversality also sponsors other community outreach programs that assist in building and/or rebuilding key economic and social resources.

“Communiversality is a special program. It allows students to come after school and receive help they may not have received at school. It also has a unique twist that encourages students to want to do well. It helps build children's self-esteem, and that is so positive.”

~Mrs. Tanyi, Communiversality Donor

Fall 2005 Communiversality Leadership

Lotticia Mack, Director	Ashley Heilprin, Cultural Literacy Coordinator
Ebonie Leonard, Program Coordinator	Iman Kedir, Cultural Literacy Coordinator
Nikki Roberson, Program Coordinator	Morgan Buck, Homework Assistance Coordinator
Dezyre Dennis, Hargraves Coordinator	Heran Medhin, Homework Assistance Coordinator
Alexis Carr, Hargraves Coordinator	
Allare Gaskins, Cultural Literacy Coordinator	