

Fort Smith Noon Exchange Club

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STATISTICS FOR MARCH 9, 2007:

Presiding	Scott Monroe
Invocation	Buddy Acoach
Guest Slips	David Harris
50/50 Tickets	Ruth and Bill Pitts
50/50 Winner	Bill Klusmeir (Returned to the club)

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Charolette Tidwell has submitted her application for membership. Great!
- Thurman Jordan's photos of the Golden Deeds Banquet are available at the front table for viewing.
- Remember! No meeting on March 23. Instead, we will meet at Girls Inc at 8:30am on Saturday.

PROGRAM:

The program was presented by Bob Lever, Director of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Bob told us that the program works extremely well and provides an avenue for our young athletes to come to know God. Many local coaches are involved and they are a superior group. Often, they become "father figures" to the players and are able to guide them through tough life choices. Bob says the focus now is to expand the program to even younger athletes. That's being done through Sport Camps; all across the state. The latest innovation is the "First Serve Program" which is Tennis oriented. First Serve is totally drug free and is growing. It takes about \$160,000.00 to run the FCA for a year and that is done with all local donated funds.

HUMOR:

An 80 year old couple was having problems remembering things, so they decided to go to their doctor to get checked out to make sure nothing was wrong with them. When they arrived at the doctor's, they explained to the doctor about the problems they were having with their memory.

After checking the couple out, the doctor tells them that they were physically okay but might want to start writing things down and make notes to help them remember things. The couple thanked the doctor and left.

Later that night while watching TV, the old man got up from his chair and his wife asks, "Where are you going?" He replies, "To the kitchen."

She asks, "Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?"

He replies, "Sure."

She then asks him, "Don't you think you should write it down so you can remember it?"

He says, "No, I can remember that."

She then says, "Well, I also would like some strawberries on top. You had better write that down cause I know you'll forget that."

He says, "I can remember that, you want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries."

She replies, "Well, I also would like whipped cream on top. I know you will forget that so you better write it down."

With irritation in his voice, he says, "I don't need to write that down, I can remember that." He then fumes into the kitchen.

After about 20 minutes he returns from the kitchen and hands her a plate of bacon and eggs.

She stares at the plate for a moment and says, "You forgot my toast."

FUTURE PROGRAMS:

03/16--- Dave Burdue, Family Communications Radio

EXTRA: Enclosed, is the newspaper article on Charolette Tidwell and the Golden Deeds Banquet
Charolette Tidwell immediately telegraphs a locomotive-like drive and a beaming smile.

The 61-year-old Fort Smith native looks and has the energy of someone half her age, even though the majority of

her time is spent giving to people in need. Tidwell is ambitious but remarkably calm. She's strong physically and mentally and even is mathematical in her organizational skills. Yet Tidwell retains a burning compassion for all men, women and children.

In her busy world, a clock's arms spin forward as Tidwell oversees the Antioch District Association, a ministry based at the Lincoln Youth Center, 1422 N. Eighth St. The program distributes food to about 700 low-income and elderly people from 2 to 5 p.m. weekdays. Yet Tidwell makes time to stop and chat with her friends and strangers.

For her energy, kindness and joy from helping the community, Tidwell recently was named the Fort Smith Noon Exchange Club's annual Book of Golden Deeds winner. The group has a special committee that evaluates nominees for their volunteerism and support of area programs and people. Club member Michael Helm nominated Tidwell, the program's 65th honoree, and introduced her during a recent ceremony at Fianna Hills Country Club.

"I met Charolette in 1977 when I arrived in Fort Smith to work at Sparks Regional Medical Center," Helm said. "She was the nursing director, and I was an associate administrator. She has always been an extremely giving individual."

Helm admires that Tidwell, congregation members from six churches and a handful of volunteers operate the food ministry.

"I've watched Charolette work in the north side of town, and she has a wonderful food distribution program," he said. "She funds that almost entirely herself. She's a dynamo. She's full of energy."

Tidwell admitted she was "absolutely shocked" when she heard she was nominated for the award.

"Oh, I was delighted, and it was a dream of my late husband, Lawrence, one of the original founders of the Lincoln Youth Service Center," she said as her tone grew soft. "He won a Golden Apple Award and he would say, 'Wouldn't it be nice if you could get the Golden Deeds Award?'"

Tidwell then smiled while remembering her late husband of 40 years.

"I accepted the award on behalf my husband, who died in 1997, and I do this for his memory and for his commitment to community service," said the mother of two children. "Shortly after he died, I put this program in place, and it went gung-ho in 2001. I love helping people in the community."

Tidwell thrives on help from the small, effective congregations of Ninth Street Baptist Church, Unity Baptist Church and House of Prayer and Praise, all in Fort Smith, Greater Pilgrim Rest and New Hope Baptist Church, both in Van Buren, and Zion Alma Baptist Church in Alma. They feel honored to help feed people from Mountainburg, Greenwood, Moffett, Roland, Pocola and other area communities.

"One time, there was a guy with a child on a bicycle who rode here from Alma; the guy had a wagon attached to the bike," Tidwell said. "He was getting food for nine people, and we had the food bagged up. Needless to say, we made sure we delivered the food and him back to Alma. There was no way a man on a bicycle with a child could ride with that much food back to Alma. It shows that people do need help."

Many of the program's clients have jobs and children, but they just don't have enough money to feed their families, she said.

"We have a lot of working poor people here," Tidwell said. "And many, many, many of them have children. We see all kinds of ethnic groups here."

In addition to the food aspect, Tidwell's program involves about 150 youths between the ages of 3 and 21. Those children, teenagers and young adults help with the program, visit area nursing home residents and participate in various drama productions and field trips. Each summer, three of the participants are selected to participate in the Gifted and Talented Program at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

“We push academic excellence really hard here,” said Tidwell, who holds a bachelor’s degree in applied sciences from the University of the Ozarks, a bachelor’s degree in nursing from Arkansas Tech University and a master’s degree in health education from the University of Arkansas.

“And we want to help teach these children while they’re very young the importance of community service,” she added. “We want them to realize the need to help people in the community. We have children in here helping us prepare food boxes for families.”

While working at Sparks as a charge nurse, Tidwell realized what she said was her “true calling” to help people. The Lincoln High School graduate served as director of nursing at Sparks for 17 years before working as director of health and wellness at Beverly Enterprises. She retired from Beverly in 2001 and has served on boards and supported the Western Arkansas Counseling & Guidance Center, Fort Smith Fights AIDS, the Fort Smith Art Center, United Way of Fort Smith Area, Abilities Unlimited, Credit Counseling of Arkansas, the American Diabetes Association, Gateway House, the city of Fort Smith Housing Authority and other groups and programs.

“I love doing this program now, but we do need a new building because there’s just not enough room here for us to prepare these food boxes for people,” she said. “We’re seeking help from someone who is of wealth or has influence to help us get another building. We desperately need to find a new building so we can continue to find and distribute food for people.

“And we’d love to keep the building on the north side of town, since people are used to coming here for help,” added the 1989 Leadership Fort Smith graduate. “We used to be open on Saturdays, and maybe someday, we can do that again.”

Tidwell said more volunteers are needed for the program.

“Plus, we need trucks, too,” she said with a laugh. “We really do. We drive all over the state, literally, to get food. We really could use multiple trucks to bring the food back to these people who are living in our community and are in need. People do need our help.”