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Complimentary

State Conference Addresses Policies that Impact Tennessee Women

By Camm Ashford and Faith Edwards (Contributing)

More than 300 women, and a handful of men, met Feb. 3-4 at The Westin in Chattanooga during the Mayor's Council for Women's Fourth Annual Statewide Women's Policy Conference.

With a theme of "Changing the Present, Impacting the Future: Shaping Policy - Moving Forward!" the conference offered attendees a chance to learn about women's policy issues and to advocate for a more equitable future.

"Tennessee still faces many challenges when it comes to gender equality," Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly noted. "The annual Statewide Women's Policy Conference is an occasion where we come together to celebrate our accomplishments, but we're also gathering our best and brightest as we prepare to travel the road ahead, toward a better future."

Mayor Kelly and the Chattanooga City Council proclaimed the first Friday in February as "Women's Policy Conference Day."

The Institute for Women's Policy Research in Washington conducts rigorous national research on women's issues, and assigns states a grade based on this data. Tennessee received D's and D-'s.

"The thing is, things have not gotten that much better in Tennessee, so we're still dealing with some of the same issues," Chattanooga District 6 Councilperson Dr. Carol Berz, who serves as chair of the Mayor's Council for Women, said during the opening plenary on Friday.

Additional conference speakers included Dr. Jeamine Carpenter, director of Research and Policy for the Women's Fund of Greater Chattanooga; Christine Raino, senior director of Public Policy at Shared Hope International in Washington, D.C.; Beverly Watts, Executive Director, TN Human Rights Commission; Dr. Eve Valera, associate professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School; and Shanna Hughey, president of Think Tennessee in Nashville.

The Mayor's Council for Women is made up of three focus areas that "work together to break down the barriers that prevent too many women in our community from living the life they want to live."



Conference sessions on Friday addressed a variety of focus areas--sexual harassment (justice), legislation impacting women's health (health); "to be seen is to succeed" (empowerment); Intimate Partner Violence: The Brain injuries we are not seeing (health); and "The Power to Make Change!"

"Empowerment through Music" was provided by Sonic Essence of Atlanta. The group was sponsored by the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc. and Novare Digital.

"During the conference, I was able to learn more about the initiatives going on to help empower women in Tennessee," said Shelly L. Vann, a life empowerment coach based in Chattanooga. "It was very interesting, but somewhat disheartening, as well--to hear all the disturbing information about human trafficking and about the continuing inequality in women's pay and how legislation is sort of blocking women from getting the pay they need."

"Our local NCBW Chapter was indeed gratified to be part of a mutually, beneficial partnership between the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc., and the Statewide Women's Policy Conference led by the Mayor's Council



Top Photo: NCBW, Chattanooga Chapter Conference Attendees. Bottom Photo: The Honorable Dr. Carol Berz, Conference Chair (Chattanooga City Council, District 6) and Conference Steering Committee (Photos by Fred Cousin Photography)

for Women and by working in concert to provide effective educational networking among the community and its stakeholders. The NCBW Chattanooga Chapter was also fortunate to have NCBW National President, Elizabeth Jones not only join us for the Women's Policy Conference but participate as Luncheon speaker. Representatives of NCBW TN Chapters from Knoxville, Nashville, and Memphis also attended the conference. Our primary initiatives include focus on civic engagement legislation; supporting ad-

vocacy agendas; voter education, registration & voter rights; and increasing the number of women candidates running for political office," said NCBW Chattanooga Chapter Elizabeth Appling.

In addition to serious policy discussion, opportunities were available for attendees to network and shop vendors--including author Beverly A. Morris of Memphis who was featured in the Jan.

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A&T Four is More than a Monument, It's a Moment that Changed the World



From left to right: David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Jibreel Khazan and Joseph McNeil stand in front of the statue commemorating the A&T Four on North Carolina's A&T campus. (Submitted Photo)

By Alexis Davis

GREENSBORO, N.C. – North Carolina A&T State University's kickoff to Black History Month var-

ies from typical events at other historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). This year, N.C. A&T's annual February One commemoration celebrates the 62nd anniversary

of the A&T Four. On Feb. 1, 1960, freshmen David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil and Ezell Blair Jr. (now Jibreel Khazan) sat at F.W. Woolworth's whites-only lunch counter in Greensboro to protest segregation.

The February One Monument is an important landmark on A&T's campus that sets it apart from other institutions. The four courageous freshmen who conducted the sit-in, which was the catalyst for similar sit-ins nationwide, are portrayed in bronze, depicted in similar clothing they wore that day. The monument includes a summary of the sit-in. When they sat down at the 66-seat, L-shaped metal counter on 132 S. Elm St., they were denied service but stayed until they were forced to leave.

"It just goes back to the true meaning of Aggie Pride," said Armani May, a former Mister A&T from South Haven, Michigan. "They were just so courageous and can be

looked at as the standard of being a Black man willing to break barriers. The official meaning of Aggie Pride is achieving great goals in everything and producing renowned individuals dedicated to excellence so, it's all in the acronym. They knew what they were standing on and standing for."

On Feb. 2, 1960, 25 students from A&T, Bennett College and neighboring institutions joined the original four in their sit-ins. As February progressed, sit-ins started throughout North Carolina. Before the month ended, the sit-ins had spread to more

In July 1960, the Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro was desegregated. All four of the sit-in participants led lives of change and advocacy and never forgot their N.C. A&T roots.

Dawn Murphy is assistant vice chancellor for stu-

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