

Senior Saints Ministry celebrates 10th annual Red and White Valentine's Luncheon



Fayetteville comedian Mamma Dot performs her standup routine at the Red and White Valentine's Luncheon. Over 200 seniors attended this year's festivities at Antioch Baptist Church in Durham.

By Thaddeus Berglund
Durham VOICE Staff Writer

Love was in the air this past Thursday when over 200 seniors gathered at the Durham Armory to enjoy food, fun and fellowship with one another at the Red and White Valentine's Luncheon.

For many people Valentine's Day is filled with love and time spent with the people cared about most; however, for some this is not always guaranteed. This is why 10 years ago the Senior Saints Ministry at the Antioch Baptist Church began the annual luncheon to provide an opportunity for fellowship with other seniors and to share the love.

"It is a love gathering for people... A lot of people don't have anyone," said Joann Kelley, who has attended the event every year.

During the lunch, attendees enjoyed the sounds of the Gospel Jubilators — a Durham-based a capella group founded more than 40 years ago — laughed at the jokes of Fayetteville comedian Mamma Dot and joined together to sing, pray and dance with each other into the afternoon.

"There is always different entertainment, and there is something to enjoy no matter the age — whether you are 55 or 75," said Glenard Williams, who attended this year's event for the third time with his wife.

With the amount of love and comradery in the air, it is no surprise that the event has grown in size each year. From its beginnings in the basement of the Antioch Baptist Church to the over two hundred seniors who attended this year, the Senior Saints Ministry has worked hard to include as many people as possible in its annual gathering. Kelley said the first year she attended with just one friend of hers and the following year she brought 11 people because she wanted to share the experience with others.

This year, Mildred Henderson, a member of the Greater St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church and Nubian Red Hat Society, sold a record 73 tickets. Henderson, who has gone to the luncheon every year, said that the fellowship is her favorite part of the whole event.

For the Rev. Dr. Michael D. Page of the

Antioch Baptist Church, said this event is important to him because of the joy and fellowship he gets to see in everyone around him and how it has grown over the years.

As printed on the back of the program:

*"Love from Jesus
This Christian Valentine message
sends you love I got from Jesus,
love I learned from the gospels,
found in His words,
His actions, His example.
This Christian Valentine saying
conveys love I didn't have
before I was saved,
couldn't relate to or understand
before I gave my life to the Lord.
On Valentine's Day,
know that I love you and want to
lift you up, encourage you and serve
you.*

Happy Valentine's Day!"

By Joanna Fuchs