

## Scene & Heard

### Baby Boon: Outreach Alliance benefits

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Grace White, only three weeks old, looked ravishing in pink Saturday night as she attended her first social gathering, a silent-auction fundraiser for Outreach Alliance for Babies, Inc. She slept through most of the evening, but her mother, Jenny White, and her grandmother Linda White, treasurer of the Outreach board of directors, enjoyed lots of good food, music and fellowship.

Phyllis Sample Bonds knows that a lot of babies aren't as fortunate as Grace. So a little more than 17 months ago she decided to do something about it. Bonds worked for 31 years in nursing education, with the last 15 spent as the director of the associate nursing degree program at Forsyth Technical Community College. She retired and started a gift-basket business in January 2005. Her rapid success spawned her next idea - to donate a basket full of baby clothes and other baby essentials once a month. She met her first needy family in a Food Lion parking lot. "I could see they needed help, and I thought, 'I can start an organization and help more than one baby.'"

In May 2005 she founded Outreach Alliance for Babies and delivered her first basket the next month. The organization has delivered more than 100 baskets since then. Saturday night, Mayor Allen Joines told the story of meeting Bonds two and a half years ago. "She came to me, all full of vim and vigor, and convinced me that she would make this happen," he said. "She has filled a void in our community."

Today, the organization works through many community organizations, including Today's Woman, the Baby Love Program, Experiment in Self-Reliance, the Mother/Baby Unit (Sara Lee Center for Women), the Forsyth County Legal Aid Society, Hand to Hand (Catholic Social Services), the Downtown Health Plaza and Sister to Sister.

"We give families something they can use, with no strings attached," said Juan Suarez, who served as master of ceremonies with fellow board member Aiza Diaz, of WXII Channel 12. The two encouraged the crowd. "You can't get these things at Wally World," said Suarez, hawking the weekend getaway to Floyd, Va., a two-month membership to the Piedmont Club and other silent-auction items. Dr. Tim Monroe, the director of the Forsyth County Health Department, appeared to consider bidding on a DVD player. He attended the fundraiser with his wife, Helen Monroe, a first-time silent-auction volunteer. "Anytime I can help children who are less fortunate, I will be there," Mrs. Monroe said. Linda and Peter Freeman shared a table with Luther Lowery. Both Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Lowery worked with Bonds at Forsyth Technical Community College and said they were pleased to be involved in her new project. "This is my first fundraiser, but it won't

be my last," Mrs. Lowery said.

This year's silent auction was sponsored by Allegacy Federal Credit Union and employees of the law department at R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. Dorothy Henley, director of board and shareholder services at Reynolds, said she and her coworkers enjoy buying items for the baskets. She said that the Outreach mission is in line with their other volunteer work with the foster-care program.

One of the Outreach baskets was delivered by Fontaine Kirk-Graham, of the Forsyth County Health Department Baby Love program. "I worked with a mother who lost everything when her trailer burned," she said. "When I took her the basket, she was so appreciative, and it made me feel good to take something to someone who had nothing." Donna Joyner, a registered nurse and Outreach board member, delivered the 100th basket to the intensive-care-unit bedside of a baby recovering from heart surgery at Brenner Children's Hospital.

Both Dr. Robert Dillard and his wife, Laura, have seen the good work of Outreach Alliance for Babies. Dr. Dillard is the director of the neonatal intensive-care unit at Forsyth Medical Center; Mrs. Dillard is a perinatal social worker. "One of the patients we worked with was robbed shortly before she gave birth," Mrs. Dillard said. "Everything was stolen. We called Phyllis Bonds and told her the story. She came with a basket and saved the day."

"I'm hearing positive things about the group doing a lot of good things in the community," said Mike Robinson, a coordinator at the Downtown Health Plaza. "It's a new group, but I'm hearing a lot about it in the inner city." Robinson enjoyed the evening with his wife, Claire.

Berta Andrade, Imprints coordinator, attended the event with Doris Ashcraft, Imprints parent educator, and Ashcraft's mother, Maria Luz Salazar, visiting from Ecuador. Imprints, a free program for pregnant women offered at the Downtown Health Plaza, has worked with Outreach for about a year. "Phyllis is a very special person, and she loves the community," Andrade said. "As soon as she found out what we do, she was there. She continues to provide two baskets for the baby showers at the end of each of our two-week sessions."

Charrissa Daunais and Darrell Wilkes Jr. are expecting the birth of their son on March 3. They took parenting classes from Imprints recently and won one of the Outreach baskets during a raffle. "It was so nice to know that somebody cares when they didn't have to," Wilkes said. "The world is so full of hate, and to see somebody genuinely care is overwhelming."