

## Atomic City Sportsmen Club celebrates 40 years! – Part 2

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on December 22, 2009)

As we continue our look at the Atomic City Sportsmen Club, Inc. of Oak Ridge, and before we examine some of the major projects they have undertaken over the years, let's first take a look at their logo. That will help us better understand the basic tenants of the organization.

The idea for a logo for the Atomic City Sportsmen Club originated with the late E. H. Upton, an Oak Ridge City Councilman and former member of the organization. Mr. Upton enlisted help from the late Nat Johnson, a DOE graphic designer, to complete the logo.

The concept for the logo was "to bring all people together." The design shows this by the two hands on the right side, one shaded and one unshaded. The arrows around the sides depict the directions of north, south, east and west. The underlying focus is that no one should be excluded.

As mentioned in the last article, this group formed in 1969 by a group of African American men who came to Oak Ridge when hired by the major employers here as they sought to meet their Affirmative Action initiatives. From this unusual and somewhat urgent beginning on the part of these young professionals, a great and lasting tradition has been generated, much to the benefit of our community.

What started out as a "club" to help these men form and sustain companionship relationships quickly evolved into a viable and effective organization that could raise money for the causes they chose to support. This realization led them to do even more for their newly found community.

Their stated purpose was and remains today, "to aid the youth, underprivileged, and charitable organizations in the Oak Ridge area." Fundraising is a primary method to accomplish these goals. They continue to meet these goals today as they have over the years since 1969.

Examples of some of the many successful fundraisers they hold are: the Annual Golf Tournament, the Diversity Celebration Luncheon, fashion shows, various social events, auctions, football classic trips, theatrical play trips, blues concerts, ethnic food tastings, barbeque sales and many other activities have all contributed to the good of the community.

These men who form the officers and membership of this special club in our community over the years have all been engaged in some of the most effective fundraising efforts that have existed in Oak Ridge as well as supporting a host of charitable activities. They rightfully deserve to feel pride in their accomplishments!

Some of the projects the club has sponsored over the years have been: the Sickle Cell Testing Program, voter registration drives, the Annual Scholarship Program, the Annual Fun in the Sun event, the Annual Children's Christmas Party, the Annual Martin Luther King Day Breakfast, the Million Man March trip, the Black history Bowl, support of Oak Ridge Boys and Girls Club teams, senior citizen activities and many more similar projects.

The men I met with who shared this story with me were, Chris Hammonds – president of the club, Horace Miller and Jim Barnes – both founding members of the club, Nelson Stephens, Al Guidry, Dennis Venable and Larry Gipson. These men have humble spirits and are interested in doing good things for the youth of their community and other charitable organizations.

It was hard to draw out of them the details of the organization's accomplishments. They are humble men. They just do what needs to be done without ceremony or other self promotion. They don't seek accolades for what they do and it is obvious that they love to see the results of what they do. They are obviously uncomfortable with praise for their many accomplishments. It is refreshing to talk to them!

One of the most significant club accomplishments is their scholarship program started in 2001 that has provided financial help to approximately 30 youths to date to help them go to college. The program

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started with one student and the club supported her throughout her four years in college to graduation. Since then, the club usually supports several students each year based on available money.

Many of the recipients might not have been able to complete college without the help of these scholarships. Over \$50,000 has been provided thus far and even more scholarships are planned for the future.

Another aspect of this unique organization is the ability they have to bring well-known personalities to speak in Oak Ridge. Over the years they have succeeded in bringing such renowned speakers as: The Rev. Walter E. Fauntroy, former congressman and president of the National Black Leadership Roundtable; Attorney Thomas Todd, Chicago, Illinois - Nationally Acclaimed Civil Rights Leader; The Rev. Harold Middlebrook Sr.; Congressman Harold Ford Jr.; Congressman Zack Wamp; Congressman James E. Clyburn; The Reverend Joseph Lowery; Dr. John Turner, TVA's Senior Vice President of Education, Training and Diversity; Joe LaGrone; The Honorable Nathaniel Mosby, Dekalb County Commissioner; Bob Booker; Edye Ellis and many others.

The *Atomic City Sportsmen Club, Inc.* is one of the great success stories of Oak Ridge. It is a part of our historic fabric and epitomizes the type of caring attitudes that often are associated with clubs and organizations in our city who seek to help others. .

These men who founded that club have now become leaders in our community, a far cry from the days when they came to this city. They have made their place and rightly deserve to celebrate 40 years of charitable services to youth and others in need in Oak Ridge and the surrounding community.

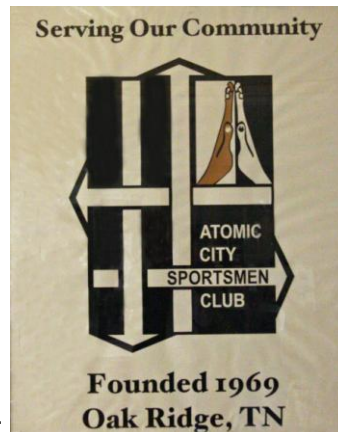
I am proud to have gotten to know these men. Their humble yet powerful spirit of honor and service has obviously become a primary hallmark of their organization. Each of them, in their own way, contribute to the continued success of this venture from the late 1960's, an era long gone - but not yet forgotten, but one that produced a lasting organization that has continued to lead the way to diversity and effective fundraising.

The Atomic City Sportsmen Club, Inc. is an example of what can be done when a few highly motivated leaders decide to bond together in helping others. We need more of these type organizations! Thank you, men, for showing us the way through your personal example of "servant leadership." You are among my many heroes of Oak Ridge!

The organization's current activities can be viewed at the web site at <http://www.discoveret.org/acsc/>.

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The logo of the Secret City Sportsmen Club represents their desire to “Bring all people together” and proudly demonstrates the ideals of their organization



In this photograph of scholarships made in 2005, The Atomic City Sportsmen Club, Inc. presented scholarships to eight students from the local community. This marked the fourth year of the program and totaled over \$16,000 given to high school and university youth. Pictured here are: first row from left, Tiffany Toy, Shani Hammonds and Latoya Shepard; second row, from left, Josh Florea, Laura Nolan, April Little, Christopher, Ashley, Alex Green and club member Larry Gipson; third row, from left, club members Jim Dee, Joe Grey and Richard Green.