



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***MECKLENBURG COUNCIL OF ELDERS
COMPLETES COURT COLLEGE***

The executive director of Mecklenburg Council of Elders (MCOE), C. Maria Macon announces today, that 12 of its 15-member governing body has successfully completed the Justice Initiatives education program Court College.

The Court College program is a 14- hour program meeting 2-hours weekly in the evening for seven weeks. The program offers the community an up close and personal look at how the court system operates. Court College is just one of several training requirements for members of MCOE.

“It is important to the success of the services that we offer to the public that our members are wholly equipped to do the very best job for our community” says Macon “particularly given the audience that most needs the work that we do, that work is criminal justice”

Everyone must be trained from the president, Sylvia L. Grier to the executive director, Macon, who is also the founder of the organization. “We don’t want to be just a pretty name” says Fredy Romero, media & IT with the organization “we have to be serious and intentional, there are people depending on our voices to be their voices and much more than that” injects Romero.

Other training that the organization’s policy requires are 1- Basic Mediation (2 days of theory) plus volunteering in Personal Warrant Court (PWC) for practical experience observing, co-mediating and mediating at least 4 cases; 2- Cultural Awareness Training (2 hours) facilitated by Maura Chavez – CRC liaison; 3- Race Matters Juvenile Justice (RMJJ) -2 full days (16 hours) of intense interaction of listening and talk-back experiences; 4- CMPD Citizens Academy a seven week program held on Tuesdays from 6:30pm – 9:30pm with a graduation component;



5- Know Your Rights: Youth Symposium (1-day 5 hour session) held quarterly; 6- CMPD Transparency Workshop and participate in the 7- Criminal Record Expunction Clinics held throughout the year.

The mission of **Mecklenburg Council of Elders, Inc.** is to serve as a legal service agency; promoting criminal justice to create a sense of safety, trust and justice through provided programs and educational awareness that serves as an alternative to arrest of youth, young adults and adults of all ages. Thereby, implementing community services with goals and objectives toward three (3) primary concerns: **Prevention, Intervention and Post Incarceration**; which addresses the areas of Law, Justice and Community Outreach.

History


Mecklenburg Council of Elders, Inc is the phoenix organization emerging, from a committee of dedicated volunteers of the Charlotte/Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee (CRC), into a legally structured 501c3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization. The organization is a collaboration of 15 organization leaders working as one-body. The work of the organization started in 2014 when the Crisis Response Committee of CRC was created, and thought was injected into the questions *“What appears to be the real crisis emerging through the crevices of our city that could rip through the fabric of Charlotte?”* and, *“what could/should be put into place to reinforce that tapestry of cultures, races and customs?”*

Thirty-Three organizational heads, community leaders and public folks (from nonprofits to churches) were brought together under the CRC banner to work through the process of answering these two main questions.

Many meetings ensued, and much dialogue engaged as the group had to work through its own cultural, racial and customs differences. Some did not survive.

But, after 36 hours of meetings over a 12-month period and over 150 hours of training, in mid-2015 the Council of Elders emerged.

Today the Council of Elders is now the Mecklenburg Council of Elders and has become one of the most highly trained groups in Charlotte. Having undergone training and certification in Basic Mediation and Personal Warrant Court training;


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Implicit Bias workshops; the Asst. Public Defender's Know Your Rights; Court College; 13th Amendment viewing; CMPD Citizen's Academy; CMPD Transparency workshops; Dismantling Racism and hands-on criminal justice expunction training.

Mecklenburg Council of Elders, Inc. is comprised of 94% male (African White and Hispanic Americans) and 6% female (African and White Americans).

Mecklenburg Council of Elders meets monthly on the 1st Wednesday of each month at Mecklenburg County Bar 2850 Zebulon Ave. in Charlotte, NC from 4:00pm – 6:00pm, there is no general meeting in December.

Expungement Clinics and the Know Your Rights Youth Symposiums are held 4 times a year. Two emerging programs are the Juvenile Court Watch designed to serve as a juvenile advocacy post-sentencing program and Post-Incarceration Evaluation, a wrap-around service designed to retard recidivism.



Pictured Left to Right: Dr. Vanessa Stuart, April Benson, Camilli Stephens, Sylvia L. Grier, Jaci Ross Robinson; **Back roll:** Garcia Nelson, Thomas Townsend
Not Pictured: C. Maria Macon, George Fitts and Beth Marlin