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Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury Employees Enjoy Visit to “Big Mama’s House”

The sounds of Gospel music and the savory aromas of soul food cooking emanated from the auditorium at Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury on Friday, February 25 as the staff at the continuing care community in Irvington visited “Big Mama’s House.” RWC Chaplain Davis Smith said the Unity Event was organized during Black History Month to educate staff on contributions African Americans have made to the culture of the United States and give employees a chance to relax and celebrate.

The staff and their guests sampled dishes from a buffet that was reminiscent of outdoor picnics on long Southern evenings. Entertainment was provided by Gospel singers Betty and Paul Polk, the Conaway family, four brothers and their sister, the Crockett family, soloist Sandie Gray, and a quartet that included Betty Polk, her mother and two sisters. The festivities also included appearances by notable personages such as “Martin Luther King,” portrayed by Lanford Lee, and

“Miss Jane Pittman,” portrayed by Myrtle Thompson. The Reverend Dwight Johnson delivered a sermon.

While numerous members of the RWC staff had a hand in planning and staging the event, the force behind the day’s activities was RWC employee Genita Maiden-Shearin, who is also an ordained minister. Maiden-Shearin, who appeared as Big Mama at the event, said she was delighted to have the opportunity to introduce co-workers to a slice of American history and culture that has been a part of her life for years. She smiled when asked about representing a revered figure in the African American community. “Oh, it’s nice to be able to give out some advice to folks who want to know what Big Mama has to say about bringing up children or running a household.”