



MACON/BIBB CITIZEN
ADVOCACY, INC.

COMMUNITY CURRENTS

SPRING 2013

Meet Deacon Frazier Smith

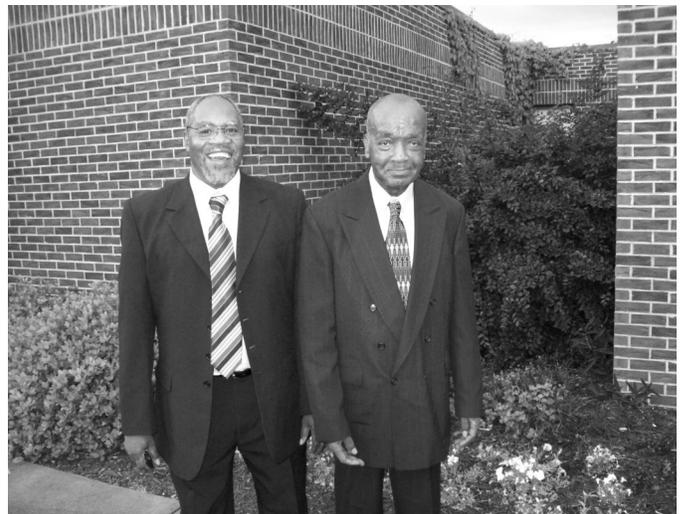
Mr. Frazier Smith was born in Elberton, GA seventy-eight years ago. He comes from a big family, the youngest one of eight. There were four boys and four girls. Mr. Smith grew up on a farm and attended an all black school in 1939 called Benny Grove School. He went to school through the third grade until his parents made him stay at home and work because he didn't learn as fast as the rest of his brothers and sisters.

Mr. Smith enjoyed the farm life, tending to the crops and taking care of the animals was the rhythm of his day until he found pleasure running through the fields inhaling the fresh air. One day while running through the fields he ran off. His parents were concerned and took him to the doctor who advised them to admit him to Central State Hospital in Milledgeville in 1949. Mr. Smith lived there for twenty-two years then later moved to Macon, GA where he still lives today.

For more than 60 years Mr. Smith has been institutionalized, living far away from family and friends. His life became a lonely one with no familiar faces and no one he could trust. So, he settled into the way it was, realizing that he was confined to the walls of the facility in which he lived. He became afraid of the world he left behind and decided in his heart that he would never leave the nursing facility.

The good news is that Citizen Advocacy understood the rejection and isolation Mr. Smith experienced during those years. It became necessary for us to build a relationship with him with the intention of introducing him to someone in the community who would build a caring friendship of trust and respect. We spent much time getting to know him, taking our lead from him. Once trust was developed, Mr. Frazier Smith walked out the doors of the nursing facility for the first time in many, many years.

On November 30, 2011 Mr. Frazier Smith met Connelly and Mary Poole. The Pooles have now known Mr. Smith for 2 years and he has become an honorary member of their family. Mr. Smith, who never left the nursing facility, now waits for Mr. Poole to pick him up on Thursday evenings for dinner at their home, or Church services on Sunday mornings. The Pooles want to share their lives with Mr. Smith. They carefully thought about the life he's lived inside facilities, and wondered how he could become more a part of his community. With the Pooles, Mr. Smith has attended Christmas parties, agricultural events, family gatherings, and the 100 year celebration of the "Titanic" at Theatre Macon. The Pooles however, wanted still more for him. In thinking about how important it is for all of us to have roles that are valued in our family and in our community, Mr. Poole made Mr. Smith a Deacon of his church. Mr. Smith is now called Deacon Frazier by the Pooles, the church, others in the community and staff at the nursing facility. (story continued on page 2)



Connelly Poole and Frazier Smith

(Story continued from page 1)

The Pooles are thrilled to share stories about how much Deacon Frazier has made a difference in their lives. We have captured this excitement in the following questions.

1. What impact has being in a relationship with Deacon Frazier had on your life?

I think being friends with Frazier did more for us than it did for him. He made us reflect on our own lives. He opens your eyes up. He made us identify with devaluation and recognize that we have been devalued as well. He heals you. But then you look out of those same eyes and see how sick and hurtful the world is and question the actions of those who call themselves “normal.”

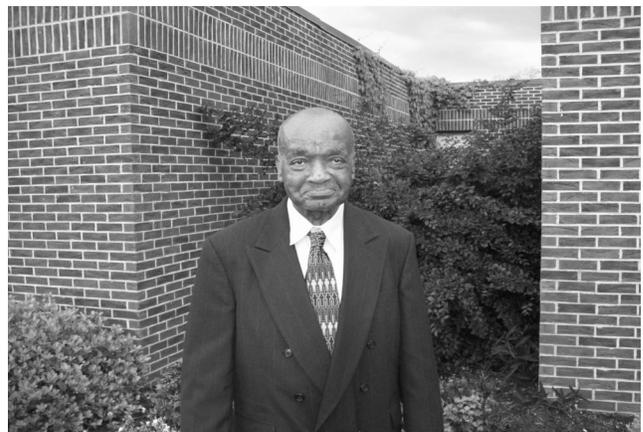
2. How do you feel Deacon Frazier has changed?

I feel that Frazier is not afraid anymore, he’s learned to trust. He smiles more; he’s more independent because when he’s with us we ask him what he wants. He’s making more decisions and he enjoys coming home with us. His appearance has changed; his confidence in himself is stronger. But most of all I believe that he knows that he has a place in our home.

3. Self Reflection?

I learned that when you try to make people understand what hurt has been done to people with developmental disabilities and that our society still devalues groups of people, they think that they’re already there. It is impossible for anyone to know unless they have been on the inside to see for themselves and to walk in that person’s shoes. I was blind because I didn’t know but now I want to make others aware of their stereotypical mindsets.

All in all we look forward to the years ahead filled with stories, memories and laughter.



Mary Poole, Frazier Smith and Connelly Poole

“There is no safety net that can bear the weight of human indifference, and I have yet to encounter a safety net of laws, rules, regulation and policies that was any stronger than a single concerned and engaged person, standing shoulder to shoulder with a person, navigating the daily challenges of life in the community.”

Charles Sundram, Attorney

Connection & Protection

Citizen Advocacy is built upon the capacity of individuals to care and connect to others in a one-to-one relationship. Advocates are asked to make lifelong voluntary commitments to step in, get to know and sometimes work extremely hard for and with someone they would not ordinarily meet.

Within each citizen advocacy relationship's framework of loyalty and commitment, the range of activity varies from an emphasis on practical assistance around basic needs to building a more rich personal life to critical intervention. Advocates and their partners rise to challenges and take action — together.

A few examples:

Practical:

access medical and financial support, transportation, jobs or vocational training, help with household tasks like cleaning, shopping or bill paying

Personal:

enrich social lives and sometimes offer a first personal friendship, community involvement, including sports or cultural activities or joining a church or club participation in family or holiday celebrations

Critical

Intervention:

helping avoid homelessness, becoming guardian
organizing legal representation

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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

-Margaret Mead

An Invitation to Action

Citizen Advocacy is an opportunity to stand by, for and with another person, taking action to ensure a better quality of life and an enrichment of opportunity for a person who may, because they have a disability, have suffered from isolation and segregation, rejection and danger, poverty and injustice.

Recognizing the uniqueness and importance of every life, citizen advocates have the opportunity to help reveal the value in a person's life and to commit to that person as they help them return to the community as a friend and neighbor.

Citizen Advocacy: *“It's a simple system that somehow works, almost too simple to attract a lot of attention. But it has changed lives. In a society where people are poor, impaired, or powerless are oppressed by systems they haven't help to create, they need more than a friend. They need someone who will walk with them.”*

Tresita Frey, Phoenixville, PA

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Statement of Purpose

Citizen Advocacy is not a service. Rather, it is the invitation for people leading full lives in our town to get to know others who have been excluded. Macon/Bibb Citizen Advocacy, Inc. is supported by people in our community. We are an independent non-profit organization. Citizen Advocacy is a people intensive endeavor—little by little, one person at a time.

CITIZEN ADVOCACY

A Valued Citizen, unpaid and independent of human services, creates a relationship with a person who has a developmental disability and is at risk of social exclusion.

The citizen advocate represents and responds to that person's interests, and brings the gifts and concerns of the person into circles of ordinary community life.

We're on the Web!

maconbibbcitizenadvocacy.org

Thank You

Citizen Advocacy is a community-strengthening endeavor that depends on the support of local citizens. All investments directly benefit the Macon/Bibb County community. Our thanks to these folks who have invested from January 2012 through May 2013.

INDIVIDUALS

Aurelia Bond Adams	Bill & Sandy Flatau
Phillip Bean	Bernard & Diana Fletcher
Beverly Blake	Barbara Fischer
Gwendolyn Booker	Arja Forester
Al Bond	Julie Fortney
Phil Bond	Richard & Mary George
Katina Clay	Tom & Margaret Glennon
Irene Cook	Robert & Elise Gray
Ruth Cotton	William & Karen Hahn
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