

Bogie's helps keep the spirit of the season alive

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

There are some entrepreneurs and business owners who believe civic service and giving back to the East Orange community are antithetical to running an enterprise, but Ruben Johnson, the owner of Bogie's bar and club on William Street, is not one of them.

That's why, Williams said, he recently opened his business's doors to allow Third Ward Councilman Ted Green to have his annual Day of Giving pre-Thanksgiving

event. That's also why he said he would once again be organizing a Christmas toy drive for the 2012 holiday season to make sure the needy children in East Orange won't have to make do without a gift or two from "Santa Claus."

"We enjoy helping people," Johnson said. "We do toys for the kids and we're going to have a Toys For Tots on Dec. 19 at the club. Any unwrapped toy that we can give — a good toy that people give their own kids — we're going to give to the needy kids throughout the East Orange area."

Johnson said his current charitable undertakings in the city are really just an expansion and a logical progression of the good works he's been doing in another Essex city for years. Now that he is doing business in East Orange, he said it simply makes good sense to invest in the community and the people in it, even though he also believes it is the right thing to do, too.

"We've been doing Toys For Tots in Newark for the last 15 years," Johnson said. "We also do a coat drive for the kids during the winter time and we do book bags every year for Back to School. We did 1,000 book bags this past school year. We just believe in doing charitable things to help unfortunate young people throughout the Essex County area and we've been doing it for quite some time."

Johnson said he doesn't consider his charitable efforts as "giving back" to the community because, for him, it's really all just about returning to his roots by carrying on the morals, values and ethos he grew up with. He said his parents, relatives and the members of the community that he grew up in who were more like members of his extended family than neighbors instilled all of those good things in him.

"It's because that's how we were raised down South; helping each other," Johnson said. "Coming from the poor environments, every neighbor believed in helping the other neighbor. Every parent in the community was your parent. Every child was your cousin or friend or whatever, but we were raised to help each other and you bring that kind of attitude in your everyday life. Regardless of who you're dealing with, you want to make sure that you can do something good."

It also doesn't hurt, Johnson said, to have a little Biblical wisdom to serve as an underpinning for his and anyone else's

moral and ethical actions in today's modern world.

"The scripture says: 'To whom much is given, much is expected,'" Johnson said. "That's simply saying that, if God has blessed you, then sure you should be happy to do for somebody else; to give somebody else something. To see the smile on a child's face when they get a new book bag or a new pair of sneakers or a toy or a new coat, that's a wonderful thing to do."

Johnson said he lives for that "look on a child's face." And once again, he said that, when he does do nice things for people and the community, they all live together and he always knows it's literally the right thing to do because the Bible tells him so.

"That smile is the proof of the saying that 'It is better to give than to receive,'" Johnson said. "It's because you get an opportunity to see that look on a child's face and, that look, I wouldn't trade that in for nothing in the world. It's the most beautiful thing in the world."

Green and Rahaman Muhammad, the president of SEIU Local 617 in Newark, said it is precisely because of the sentiments Johnson expressed and his sincere adherence to them that they are proud to call him friend, mentor and business associate.

"I always hear him talking and I have great respect for Ruben," Muhammad said. "He does a lot and one of the things that attracted me to him and the reason why I work with him a lot is because of his community interests and what he does for the community. I'm a big community guy, too, and I've been that way for years, so to find somebody that has the same love for the community that you have, you tend to want to hang around those people."

Muhammad said he has been "tight" with Johnson ever since they first met. He

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OHA commissioner receives national certification

On Sunday, Oct. 28, Orange Housing Authority Commissioner Clifford Ross, chairman of the board, was awarded a national certification from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials. The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials certification required Ross to complete 10 training courses mandated by the state of New Jersey's Commissioners. Ross has now joined his colleague, Commissioner Coram Rimes, as being one the few commissioners, six out of 600, in the state of New Jersey to obtain this national certification.

Ross has served on the Orange Housing Authority board for 15 years and is the longest serving commissioner. During his tenure, Ross has been instrumental in the various changes that have enhanced the quality of living for Orange Housing Authority residents; his most recent accomplishment includes overseeing the redevelopment of the new Dr. Walter G. Alexander Village.

"The opportunity to learn the current trends and gain knowledge about the new policies surrounding housing authorities translates into making informative decisions at the Orange Housing Authority," said Ross

Walter McNeil Jr., Orange Housing Authority executive director, praised Ross for his recent accomplishment. "I always



Clifford Ross

encourage our OHA commissioners to seek opportunities that will enrich the OHA community, as we rely heavily on their expertise to shepherd us through the daily challenges we face at OHA," said McNeil.

During the day, Ross works in the insurance industry in New York City, and serves on the Alcohol and Beverage Commission for the city of Orange. He and his wife, Mamie, are long-term residents of the city of Orange.



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