

Shirley and Henry Frye

2012 Honorary Co-Chairs

BY GAIL VADIA

Both Henry and Shirley Frye know the true meaning of “you reap what you sow.” From their childhood days helping out on their families’ farms in rural North Carolina, to very successful careers in their respective fields, to volunteering behind the scenes on many of the initiatives that contribute to the rich quality of life in the Piedmont Triad, this husband and wife team understands that behind each success is a lot of hard work and collaboration.

“I was born in Wayne County and grew up in Fremont, where my father was a tobacco, vegetable and swine farmer,” Shirley said. “My three sisters, brother and I each had assigned responsibilities on the farm. Mine was milking the cows each day before school, which meant I was an early riser. Then on Saturdays I joined my father as he sold vegetables, pork, beef and flowers that came from our farm door-to-door. I was his bookkeeper.”

“Growing up on our family farm in Ellerbe certainly taught me the value of hard work,” Henry agreed. “I was lucky to have that good work ethic instilled in me; and my parents, teachers and members of my community gave me sound advice as I grew up.”

Henry and Shirley Frye never lost sight of the values that were instilled in them as children. They met while attending North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro in the 1950s, and each went on to attend graduate school: Henry at The University of North Carolina School of Law and Shirley at Syracuse University. After passing the bar exam, Henry opened a private law practice in Greensboro. Shirley returned to Greensboro to become a public school teacher; the couple married and soon welcomed two sons to their family.

The Fries’ love for the Piedmont Triad had only just begun. “It’s a great place to live,” Henry explained. “Good roads, plenty of parks, museums, colleges and universities and a variety of sports arenas.” But the Fries knew the Piedmont Triad had room to grow – as do

most communities – and they were determined to play a role in that growth. As their full-time jobs took on increasing levels of responsibility locally and at a state level – Henry working his way up the state legal system to become the first African American Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court and eventually becoming Of Counsel at Brooks Pierce Law Firm, and Shirley assuming leadership positions at Bennett College, North Carolina A&T State University, and WFMY-TV – the Fries found themselves in a position to truly make a difference in the Piedmont Triad.

Henry Frye, the first African American elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives, has served as Chair of the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro, Chair of the Greensboro United Way Campaign Professional Division and Co-Chair of the 1960 Society, raising funds for beginning operations of the International Civil Rights Center and Museum.

Shirley has served or is now serving as Chair of The Joseph McKinley Bryan Foundation, Chair of the Board of Directors of United Way of Greater Greensboro, the Board of Trustees of Guilford Technical Community College, President of the Greensboro YWCA, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics and Vice President of the North Carolina A&T State University Foundation. Together, the Fries shared an honorary co-chairmanship of the committee to raise funds for Greensboro’s Center City Park and co-chaired a fundraising campaign for the National Confer-



Above: 2012 Honorary Chairs, Shirley and Henry Frye

ence for Community and Justice (NCCJ).

Because of their decades of community service and goodwill, the Fries were a natural choice for another important role: Honorary Co-Chairs of the 2012 Wyndham Championship. “We have attended most of the golf tournaments here since the late 1960s,” Shirley said. “It’s an honor to be a part of the tournament in this capacity.”

This year, the Fries look forward to attending the Wyndham Championship with their two sons, daughter-in-law, three granddaughters and grandson-in-law. “It is a healthy family outing that brings many people to our community and greatly helps the economy in the Piedmont Triad,” Shirley said. “At the same time,” adds Henry, “we will get to meet and greet lots of positive people and welcome them to the Piedmont Triad Region.”

And no one understands better than the Fries that it takes hard work – and cooperation – to make an event like the Wyndham Championship a success each year. “It is both a financial and social boost to the Piedmont Triad area,” Henry said. “It promotes the Triad and shows that people from different cities can work together on a great project for the good of all.” ■

PHOTOS BY JOHN GILLOOLY