

Goler area gets office

Truliant makes good on promise for branch there

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Lafayette Jones couldn't help beaming yesterday as he looked paternally upon the new Truliant Federal Credit Union branch in downtown Winston-Salem.

"We're blessed to have built this branch at the multicultural crossroads of our community, at a site where all kinds of good stuff are happening nearby," Jones said of the office at 893 N. Liberty St. The branch opened in February, but a grand-opening ceremony was held yesterday.

Jones is the former chairman of Victory-Masonic Mutual Credit Union, which was founded as Victory Credit Union in the Goler community in 1946. Victory was the first black-owned-and-operated credit union in Forsyth County, serving customers within a 50-mile radius.

"It was a source for loans for African-Americans at a time when the loan process wasn't exactly fair," said Jones, who is an associate director on Truliant's board of directors.

Struggling to provide advanced financial services as a \$2 million financial institution, Victory-Masonic agreed to merge with Truliant in December 2003.

At that time, Truliant pledged it would open a branch in the neighborhood. Truliant is leasing the building from Goler Community Development Corp., which occupies the first floor in the building.

Marcus Schaefer, the president and chief executive of Truliant, said that the branch is called Victory Member Financial Center to recognize Victory's heritage in the Triad's black community.

"This branch represents the culmination of a great amount of effort and collaboration," Schaefer said. "It may have taken us longer to complete than we expected, but we're proud to say that we have lived up to our commitment."

Truliant honored four Victory Masonic leaders - Robert Miller, Evon Reid, the Rev. Harry Smith and Hugh Smith Jr. - with a portrait featured in the branch.

Michael Suggs, the chairman of the Goler economic group, said that the branch

symbolizes what can be accomplished “with the power of collaboration and the power of patience among diverse groups.”

“There’s no reason that this can’t happen in other parts of our city,” Suggs said.

Truliant will hold a community gathering from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at the branch.

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