

Let's Have a Potluck!



More than 25 years ago, JB was instrumental in organizing gatherings that led to him hosting an annual potluck luncheon. Vince Daniele recalls the history of how the gatherings came to be:

During the early 1990s, a few employees from RIT's Facilities Management Services (FMS) and a handful of NTID faculty members began talking, informally, about good food and cultural traditions. Conversations were originally sparked by what one person or another had brought into the LBJ building for lunch. These conversations resulted in sharing, learning, and often good-naturedly teasing each other about which person might know more than the other about food, cooking, and eating well.

Eventually, a group of about seven to ten faculty and FMS staff members ended up going to lunch together at some of Rochester's Soul Food restaurants from time to time.

From the very beginning, JB was a leader of the luncheon crowd. What began as informal, impromptu gatherings of FMS staff and a mix of faculty from several departments sharing their cultural cuisines subsequently became an annual luncheon open to all faculty and staff.

As the event grew, JB enlisted the help of several individuals to assist with organizing the event. Eventually, the President's and Dean's offices were asked to provide financial support.

They graciously provided space and funding for drinks and some of the food, although potluck dishes have always been the hallmark of the lunches. In 1995, the event was named the *NTID Faculty/Staff Cultural Diversity Potluck Luncheon*.

An early version of the expanded luncheon was a warm-weather outdoor cookout in the LBJ courtyard—the area that is now the Dyer Arts Center—where NTID faculty and staff prepared and grilled food for more than 70 attendees. When the courtyard was closed, the event moved indoors and became an annual event during the month of February.



Cookout chefs, NTID Courtyard, 1996



Gail Gabriel



JB and Nate Dillon



Bary Siegel



Hope Williams

Eventually, the name changed to the *Black History Month Luncheon*, after which time JB added formal presentations featuring guest speakers. Speakers have included local artists, entrepreneurs, and educators. Posters, photos, and historically-accurate PowerPoint slides were incorporated, depicting African Americans who have made significant contributions to society.



Rev. Myra Brown, 2019

Through the years, several FMS supervisors have been excellent about supporting the luncheon and allowing staff members to set up, participate in, and break down the event. The NTID administration and staff from the President’s and Dean’s offices have also been wonderful in cosponsoring the event. The potluck lunch celebrating Black History Month is still organized by JB and occurs annually in February. The most recent event had more than 100 attendees.

Event Flyers 2014-2019

**Celebrating
Black History Month**

Potluck Lunch in SDC 1300
February 12th — 11:30 - 1:30




Guest Speaker — Curtis Rivers - owner of Mood Makers Books an Independent African American bookstore.

JT Reid — will share a video of MLK's "I have a dream..." speech in American Sign Language.

NTID will provide beverages and paper products. Admission is a favorite dish to pass. To sign up, please contact Anthony Concessi at ajctcs@rit.edu to indicate what your dish will be (e.g. hot/cold entrée, side dish, dessert, etc.), and whether you need an electrical outlet.

Host - JB (FMS)

Potluck Lunch Celebrating



February 24th — 11:30 - 1:00

SDC 1300




Guest Speaker
Roderick McEwen-Jones

NTID will provide beverages and paper products. Admission is a favorite dish to pass. To sign up, please contact Pam G@rit.edu to indicate what your dish will be (e.g. hot/cold entrée, side dish, dessert, etc.), and whether you need an electrical outlet.

Host - JB (FMS)


**Potluck Lunch Celebrating
Black History Month**

Tuesday, February 23rd
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
SDC-1300/1310



I was not aware of my artistic abilities until my sophomore year of high school. Neither drawing nor taking pictures was a hobby of mine. It was a self portrait I created in school that awakened my love for art. I was surprised that my drawing looked so much like me and was excited to show it to my family. Seeing the drawing, my mother asked if I could draw a portrait of my uncle who was suffering from cancer. I worried that I would not do a good job, but my mother's faith gave me confidence. Creating that drawing of my uncle allowed me to realize the joy that art can bring to others. I felt I gave my purpose to be an artist, and I hope to create meaningful art.

Guest Speaker
Illustrator
Johnnie Lee Smith




NTID will provide beverages and paper products. Admission to lunch is a favorite dish to pass. To sign up, please contact pignop@rit.edu to indicate what your dish will be (e.g. hot/cold entrée, side dish, dessert, etc.), and whether you need an electrical outlet.

Host - JB (FMS)

Black History Month Potluck Lunch Celebration

Wednesday, February 22
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
SDC-1300/1310



Guest Speaker
Melanie Funchess

Ms. Melanie Funchess is currently employed by the Mental Health Association where she serves as the Director of Community Engagement.


Ms. Funchess has served as an advocate for families and youth for many years and has worked extensively in the areas of family engagement and empowerment as well as community building. She presents, trains and consults locally and nationally in the areas of mental health in communities of color, cultural competence/culturally responsive practice, family engagement, implicit bias, cultural brokering and community partnership building.

NTID will provide beverages and paper products. Admission to lunch is a favorite dish to pass. To sign up, please contact Nalida Ruiz at nxgnop@rit.edu to indicate what your dish will be (e.g. hot/cold entrée, side dish, dessert, etc.), and whether you need an electrical outlet.

Host - JB (FMS)

Black History Month Potluck Lunch Celebration

Wednesday
February 21
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
SDC-1300/1310



Guest Speaker
Dr. Keith B. Jenkins

RIT Vice President and Associate Provost, Division for Diversity & Inclusion

Dr. Jenkins' scholarly publications and presentations center around studies in intercultural communication, political and visual rhetoric, and the rhetoric of gospel song.


Most recently, the focus of his research has been on pragmatism and the rhetoric of inclusion in Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential campaign.

NTID will provide beverages and paper products. Admission to lunch is a favorite dish to pass.

To sign up, please contact Ellen R. Johnson 5-6606 or erjnb@rit.edu to indicate what your dish will be (e.g. hot/cold entrée, side dish, dessert, etc.), and whether you need an electrical outlet.

Host - JB (FMS)

Interpreters have been requested



Rev. Myra Brown

Myra Brown is an Associate Pastor at Spiritus Christi Church of Rochester, NY in ministry for 25 years. She holds a BA in Religion and Social Justice and was trained in anti-racism work through the Crossroads organization in 2005.

POTLUCK Lunch Celebrating Black History Month *Conversations for Change*

Myra has led many racial justice workshops and anti-racism trainings for regional and local groups, youth and other national organizations across the country in places like Massachusetts, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, California and Milwaukee.

Myra leads a coalition of partners at Spiritus Christi Church, called SPARC (Spiritus Christi Anti-Racism Coalition) involving them in local issues regarding structural racism. Myra for more than 12 years has worked with groups and organizations, which included school districts, colleges, universities, faith communities, labor unions, non-profit organizations, social justice, and political groups. One of her strongest assets is her ability to lead and engage diverse groups into challenging conversations for change.

NTID will provide beverages and paper products. Admission to lunch is a favorite dish to pass. To sign up, please contact Ellen R. Johnson 5-6606 or erjnb@rit.edu to indicate what your dish will be (e.g. hot/cold entrée, side dish, dessert, etc.) and whether you need an electrical outlet.

HOST—JB (FMS)

Thursday, February 7, 2019
11:30am-2:00pm
SDC-1300/1310

JB has enlisted an impressive lineup of presenters over the years:

- 2012 - Dr. Gretchen Mims, JB's daughter
- 2013 - Dr. Charlotte LV Thoms, associate professor, NTID
- 2014 - Curtis Rivers, owner of Mood Makers Books; JT Reid, sr. admissions counselor, NTID: Martin Luther King, Jr. video presentation
- 2015 - Roderick McEwen-Jones, Facilities Management Services staff, local minister
- 2016 - Johnnie Lee Smith, illustrator, local artist
- 2017 - Melanie Funchess, director of Community Engagement, Mental Health Association
- 2018 - Dr. Keith Jenkins, vice president and associate provost for Diversity and Inclusion, RIT
- 2019 - Rev. Myra Brown - senior pastor, Spiritus Christi Church

The 2020 luncheon will feature Rodney “Wilk” Alexander Wilkinson: an ordained minister, Navy veteran, freelance artist, and muralist.



Rodney "Wilk" Alexander Wilkinson

Rodney Wilk Alexander Wilkinson is an ordained minister affiliated with the Baden Street Settlement House from 1994-2003. He holds a BS in Business Communications and a BS in Biblical Studies.

Black History Month Potluck Luncheon Celebration

The Lighter Side of Celebrating

Wilk is a member of the RIT community and he is also a freelance artist and muralist. A Navy Veteran from Clarksburg, West Virginia, Wilk moved to Rochester, New York in 1969. He has one sibling, Stephen. Wilk loves living in upstate New York and he loves to cook. With two adult sons, four grandsons and one granddaughter, Wilk, is an ordained minister who hopes his oldest son will become a pastor of a church in the future.

With a like for a variety of music, Wilk enjoys getting the most out of life and giving to others. Having a philanthropic spirit while knowing the value of unity, Wilk expresses himself through art.

Admission to lunch is a favorite dish to pass. To sign up, please contact Ellen R. Johnson x57236 or erjnb@rit.edu to indicate what you are bringing (e.g. hot/cold entree, side dish, dessert and so on) and whether you will need an electric outlet.

HOST – JB (FMS)

Friday, February 28, 2020 11:30am-2:00pm
SDC-1300/1310
Interpreters Requested

Also featured will be a dance performance by NTID students, under the direction of Thomas Warfield, senior lecturer for NTID's Department for Performing Arts. Warfield is a world-renowned dancer, singer, actor, choreographer, director, producer, educator, activist, and poet.