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*
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.

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 Sherry Covey at jscovey@ntid.edu to indicate what your dish will be (e.g., hot/cold entree, side dish, dessert, etc.), and whether you need an electrical outlet.

Host: JB (FMS)

Potluck Lunch Celebrating Black History Month

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@ntid.edu to indicate what your dish will be (e.g., hot/cold entree, 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

Guest Speaker
Illustrator
Johhnie Lee Smith

NTID will provide beverages and paper products. Admission to lunch is a favorite dish to pass. To sign up, please contact pginnop@ntid.edu to indicate what your dish will be (e.g., hot/cold entree, 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

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 presently 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 Naida Ruiz at nrruiz@ntid.org to indicate what your dish will be (e.g., hot/cold entree, side dish, dessert, etc.), and whether you need an electrical outlet.

Host - JB (FMS)

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**Black History Month Potluck Lunch Celebration**

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

Interpreters have been requested.

NTID will provide beverages and paper products. Admission to lunch is a favorite dish to pass. To sign up, please contact Ellen R. Johnson 54666 or ejohnson@ntid.org to indicate what your dish will be (e.g., hot/cold entree, side dish, dessert, etc.), and whether you need an electrical outlet.

Host - JB (FMS)

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**POTLUCK Lunch Celebrating Black History Month**

**Conversations for Change**

Rev. Myra Brown

Myra Brown is an Associate Pastor at Spiritual Community Church of Rochester. NTID for 25 years. She holds a BA in Religion and Social Justice and was trained in anti-racism work through the Consciousness organization in 2005.

Myra leads a movement partners at Spiritual Community Church called SNAC (Spiritual Community’s Network for Action) which has been working with groups and organizations, which includes schools, colleges, universities, faith communities, labor unions, migrant organizations, social justice, and political groups. They have many events every year for their ability to rally and engage diverse groups into challenging conversations on 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 54666 or ejohnson@ntid.org to indicate what your dish will be (e.g., hot/cold entree, side dish, dessert, etc.) and whether you need an electrical outlet.

**HOST—JB (FMS)**

**Thursday, February 7, 2019**
11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
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


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.