

Sunday, June 1, 2003

## Idea sown in Bible blooms in North Side

**"S**haring our common wealth" is one of Boaz and Ruth's marching orders.

Located at 3030 Meadowbridge Road in Highland Park, the organization is a faith-based initiative aimed at bringing together resources and people who want to improve their lives spiritually and economically through business partnerships.



**GAIL KELLEY**

small business

of the eyes of God," the organization's newsletter says.

"Boaz and Ruth was chosen as the [organization's] name because it reflects the ultimate community that can result between those who have more than they need and those who have less than they need," said Martha Rollins, president and CEO of the not-for-profit corporation. She also is owner of Martha's Mixture and Antiques in Carytown.

The initiative's name is rooted in the Book of Ruth, which tells the story of a woman who in a time of famine took leftovers from the fields of Boaz and was able to feed herself and others.

Eventually Boaz and Ruth, who were of different cultures, married and were the great-grandparents of King David.

"I thought of the power that can re-

sult from the relationship between those who have and those who have not.

"Everybody has a need and everybody has a gift," Rollins said.

Boaz and Ruth seeks to bring the two together. It works to achieve that goal through reducing poverty and overcoming divisions within the Richmond area by providing job training, life skills and business experience through a furniture store/training center.

The Boaz and Ruth store, which offers donated home furnishings for sale at affordable prices, opened in December. The building houses the store, a computer lab for technology classes and a workshop area for job training.

In addition to offering opportunities for shopping, the store provides the setting for job training in retail-related skills.

"We wanted to be a retail catalyst in Highland Park. We purposely chose an empty building because we believe if we and others choose to spend money in the neighborhood it'll make a difference in the whole community," Rollins said.

Lloyd Price, Boaz and Ruth's director of job training, said he moved to the Richmond area about five years ago with the hope of serving in a holistic ministry. His work at Boaz and Ruth fits the bill, he said.

"Our training program helps people who are in need of a second chance in life through providing job opportunities. It offers a chance to change from the inside out.

"We can change the aesthetics in the community but it's the people who are our greatest resource," Price said.

Rollins, too, looks at people as a great resource.

In addition to providing opportunities for people to donate household items and money, time or talent to the project, she dreams of attaining another mission.

"We're hoping that in giving people an opportunity to work on the project



DAVID BLANDHARD/TIMES-DISPATCH

Lloyd Price, Rosa Jiggetts and Martha Rollins (left to right) work in various capacities at Boaz and Ruth, a used furniture and accessories store in Highland Park. They call it "an experiment in cooperative redemption."

they can get to know each other across cultural and economic lines," she said.

The organization holds monthly

events, primarily monthly dinners, where people get together.

"Folks come from the West End, North Side, South Side . . . all over," Rollins said.

Rosa Jiggetts, who serves the project as a volunteer, has lofty expectations for it.

"I've lived in Highland Park for 30 years. What I see happening here is I see the spirit of hope. It is hope for the hopeless and it's being done by the citizens, not the government," Jiggetts said.

"What is going on here is that this is a motivator. Highland Park was the pits.

. . . But Highland Park is changing.

"This is going to go all over the state of Virginia when people see the results

of what's happening in Highland Park, . . . when they see how people's lives are being changed in the community."

Local residents can help bring about those changes, Rollins said, through these efforts:

■ donating furniture

and home accessories;

■ attending the monthly "Connecting Across Richmond" dinners; and

■ shopping at Boaz and Ruth ([www.boazandruth.com](http://www.boazandruth.com)).

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**"Our program helps people who are in need."**

**MARTHA ROLLINS**  
PRESIDENT, CEO of Boaz and Ruth