

Beloved woman hailed as her 100th birthday arrives today

Gary McLendon • Staff writer • June 30, 2010



Mother Nona Patterson Chambers of Rochester receives a cake at her 100th birthday party Tuesday at the Strathallan Hotel. (JEN RYNDA staff photographer)

Mother Nona Patterson Chambers has sung and inspired others to sing. She has raised eight children and taught others how to parent theirs.

She has helped wayward young men and women become respectable. She has counseled men and women in relationships, and she steadfastly maintains her strong relationship with the Lord.

Those gathered at the Strathallan Hotel on Tuesday testified that Chambers has touched the lives of people from New York to Florida.

She sat quietly and listened as people thanked her, hugged her, gave her a bouquet of roses and sung to her.

And she's earned such honors: Mother Nona Patterson Chambers is 100 years old today.

"I feel fine so far, thank the Lord. It is amazing," she said. "All I can say is that I'm glad to have made it over, and glad I have made a difference."

On June 30, 1910, Nona Patterson was born in the small Gulf Coast town of Red Level, Fla. — near Crystal River.

Her formal education ended after third grade. She harvested crops, fished, cut wood and washed and ironed clothes to help raise eight children in Crystal River and Valdosta, Ga.

She came to Rochester in 1986 to visit her daughter Queen Esther Pinkston and stayed. She now lives with her daughter in their Rochester home.

In 1995, Chambers earned her GED; she also became a founding member of the Akoma African-American Women's Gospel Choir, and was given the respectful title of "Mother."

Akoma has given scholarships in her name since 1996.

The daughter of a minister, Chambers still attends Faith Covenant National Church of God in Christ on Merrimac Street.

Elder Marty Harris, 29, of Bethesda C.O.G.I.C., was 7 when he first met Chambers. "She was an example of what a church mother is supposed to be," he said.

Very few people get to see 100 years of life. Chambers' advice is: "Work hard, honor your mother and father. ... Just rely on and trust in the Lord."

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