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Embracing kinks, coils and curls in hair naturally

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STAFF PHOTOS BY TIFFANY WATSON

Waldorf resident Beverly Gunn demonstrates how to stretch natural hair for specific hairstyles on Waldorf resident Londen Jordan's hair during the natural hair public forum at P.D. Brown Memorial Library.

The natural hair movement is becoming more than a trend — it's taking over the hair care industry. According to Mintel (Market Intelligence), the move to go natural has negatively affected sales of relaxers, which dropped 18.6 percent from 2013-2015.

The term “natural hair” is defined as hair whose texture hasn’t been altered by chemical straighteners, including relaxers, perms and texturizers. Natural hair is when hair is in the state that one was born with — the same natural hair texture with its natural hair color.

On Oct. 12, P.D. Brown Memorial Library in Waldorf hosted a natural hair forum presented by Candice Washington, circulation assistant, and DauVeen Walker, reference supervisor. The event invited all age groups to learn how to take care of their natural curls, maintain healthy hair, learn about the different stages of growth, repair damaged hair, style natural hair and grow long, healthy hair.

Participants walked away with plenty of natural hair product samples that can be used for their particular hair texture, along with a list of reading materials that have additional information about transitioning to natural hair. All of the reading materials can be found at the P.D. Brown Memorial Library or online through the library system.

Walker said two years ago Washington held this same forum, and because it was so successful, they decided to bring it back to the library.

“We’ve made some changes from the last event including actually showing how to do different natural hair styles,” Walker said. “We discuss weaves, Marley twists, protective styling, products, because we all use the Shea Moisture line, but now we’re branching out. I think events like this connect us with the customers more as we exchange stories. Some may stop their natural hair journey, get discouraged and need the motivation to keep going.”

Washington and Walker said people need to learn to love their natural hair and that there is a lack of appreciation for natural, curly hair.

“My initial goal was to get people talking about curly hair, appreciating it, building connections and discussing hair tips and tricks,” Washington said. “Basically opening up the natural hair community in person for people in Charles County. A majority of our staff and community has natural hair. I felt like it was so important to have programs that are aimed towards our demographic within the county.”

Different people from many backgrounds attended the public forum to learn about the natural hair movement and how they can improve their hair care routine to make better progress.

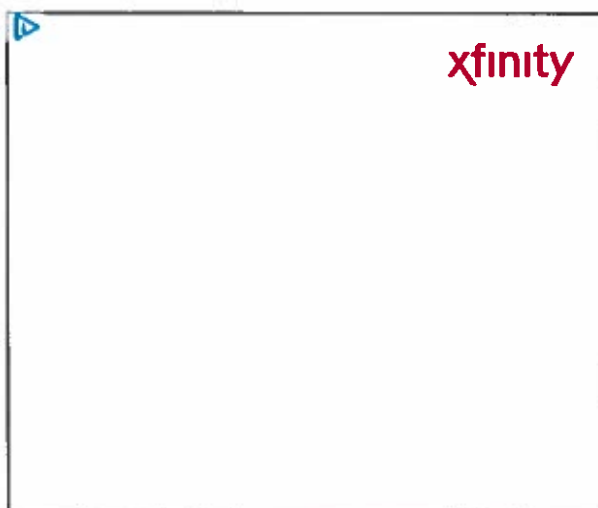
Clinton residents LaDonnyas Watson and her son, William Watson, said the forum really helped them embrace their natural hair. William said he gained more information about “co-washing, conditioner-only washing,” that he was unaware of, while his mom gained more of an understanding of her own hair texture.

“I have been on this natural hair journey for a year now and I’m still trying to figure out what products to use,” William said. “It’s been difficult because throughout the day my hair dries out and I just want to cut it all off.”

“I was natural for years but I kept my hair styles simple, pulled back in a ponytail or flat ironing it,” LaDonnyas said. “It was difficult to find the right look or the right style. After this forum, now I can understand why only certain products work for my hair type. I found this class very helpful and now I know I can also find books about my natural hair and check them out at our local library.”

Waldorf resident Sheila Jackson said she wants her hair to grow and look healthy, but she was confused about ingredients mentioned on the natural hair product labels. She also expressed how difficult her journey has been.

“When I went natural, I would wear my hair in its natural state and people were repulsed,” Jackson said. “But now those same people who criticized me are wearing their hair natural. I love my natural hair and like me, so many people are going natural now to stop their hair from [damage].”



Waldorf resident Terri Williamson said she has not had a relaxer in over 20 years and is doubtful she will ever go back.

“When I look around me I see people embracing their natural hair more and we have something in common,” Williamson said. “I am thankful for this program being at the library and I think they need to do this again because it would help a lot of people.”

Beverly Gunn of Waldorf said although she wished Washington and Walker had gone into more depth about putting protein in natural hair, she believes the women really did their homework and covered just about every natural hair topic.

“Some girls and guys who are natural don’t know where to start or are afraid to do it,” Gunn said. “I have 4c hair which is very coarse hair so many consider it to be knappy. Back in 2009 when I finally wore my hair natural to work, people looked at me and stereotyped me. Now everywhere you look, everyone is natural. I decided this is what grows out of my head and I like it.”

Washington and Walker said they look forward to potentially making the public forum a monthly event to involve more of the community. Washington said there is so much information about natural hair, and all are welcome to learn more at the local library.

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