

## **Summary Statement:**

As an educator and community activist, Tina Washington continues to consistently demonstrate a passion for making positive differences in this community and beyond.

## **Biographical Sketch:**

- Born in 1941, she spent her childhood in Gulfport, Mississippi, raised in a segregated society. Her family and community were tightly knit and the value of a good education was strongly instilled. Tina was her high school class valedictorian.
- At 16 years of age, Tina attended Dillard University (New Orleans), receiving her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education. During summers, Tina worked for two years in Wildwood, New Jersey (living with her aunt and uncle). After being trained by the Methodist Episcopal Church at Emory University, Tina spent her final two college summers by setting up Vacation Bible School programs in deprived and depressed communities in Mississippi.
- Tina and Leonard Washington married in 1963, after Leonard finished his master's degree in social work at Howard University; they have two children, Tracy Alan Fenton and Troy Alain Washington. Both children are married, reside in Maryland and have given Tina and Washington one grandson each (so far!). Tracy and Troy also graduated from Georgetown University.
- Attended graduate school at Pennsylvania State University, receiving her certification as a reading specialist and a master's equivalency
- Tina's family resided in Lebanon for five and a half years in the 1960s and moved back here in 1982; they have chosen to continue living here after Leonard retired as Chief Executive Officer of the Lebanon Veteran's Administration Medical Center and Tina retired as a full-time teacher at the Lebanon School District
- She has invested 25.5 years as an educator, primarily for elementary and jr. high students, but also taught sr. high and adult education during her career
- They were "family" to foreign exchange students through Leonard's membership in the Jaycees and Rotary Clubs, as well as The Experiment in International Living; they enjoyed creating close relationships with students from Sweden, Turkey, the Philippines, South Africa, Spain and Italy.
- The Washingtons attend Trinity United Methodist Church, Lebanon
  
- Awards and honors include:

- \* Martin Luther King Family Life Center Lifetime Achievement Award, 2005
- \* Outstanding African American, Harrisburg Interdenominational Churches, 2005
- \* African American Movers and Shakers, Patriot News, 2005
- \* Outstanding Educator of the Year (June Herr Award), Lebanon Valley College, 2004
- \* National Teacher of the Year, State of Pennsylvania, 2001
- \* Honorary Doctorate in Pedagogy, Lebanon Valley College, 1991
- \* Outstanding Woman of the Year, American Association of University Women, 1985
- \* Acknowledged by three different students as the Educator having the most positive influence on their lives by high school seniors at the annual Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce's Excellence in

### Education banquet

- During her tenure in several communities, Tina has not just been a member, but active in the following organizations:

- \* League of Women Voters
- \* American Association of University Women
- \* National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- \* Harrisburg Chapter of The Links, Inc.
- \* Lebanon Valley College, Board of Trustees
- \* Cornwall-Lebanon School District, Diversity Policy Council
- \* Hershey Museum Historical Non-Fiction Essay Judge (5th-10th grade writing competition)
- \* National State Teacher of the Year
- \* Urban League
- \* Lebanon Family Health Services, Board of Directors
- \* National Council of Negro Women
- \* Mayor's Advisory Council, Lebanon (when Jack WorriLOW was mayor in the 1960s)
- \* Harrisburg Area Community College Advisory Board

### **Qualifications:**

Tina was the first African American teacher employed by the Lebanon School District; her administrator told her he wasn't sure how she was going to be received by the community. Teaching a roomful of third graders at Franklin Elementary School wasn't easy the first two weeks of the year, as some of the parents joined their children at school. Denied housing (as there was no Fair Housing Act then), the Washingtons found a home to rent after Tina became pregnant. A fellow teacher introduced her to a local businessman, who was happy to rent them his son's former home. A steady string of friendships then began to develop among her fellow teachers and community leaders. After Tracy was born, Tina stayed home for two years before she resumed teaching full-time.

The Washingtons moved to Zion, Illinois, where Tina was one of two African American teachers in the school; but the student body was more diverse than in Lebanon. Moves followed to Skokie, Illinois and then Columbia, Maryland, where their son, Troy, was born. She did not teach there, but enjoyed being a stay-at-home mom while participating in community groups and volunteering at school. They spend 11 months in Shreveport, Louisiana, where Tina taught jr. high reading and math, during the beginning of school integration in the south.

Just before Troy entered first grade, the Washingtons relocated to Pittsford, New York, a suburb of Rochester. There, Tina worked in the "School Without Walls" program, designed for ninth through twelfth graders unable to function in the regular classroom; she taught reading, math, resume writing, social skills, and job interviewing skills for two years. Tina then changed employment to the Urban League as a job developer, working on an entry level program for adults on welfare, training them for clerical positions. This experience gave Tina a taste of corporate America. Her community involvement while in Pittsford included the Parent/Teacher Association, the National Council of Negro Women, a professional business women's group, and the Panel of American Women (designed to educate schools on diversity). Their next move was to Brecksville, Ohio when Tracy was in tenth

grade. She taught upper elementary classes in Shaker Heights (outside of Cleveland) and at Memphis Elementary School in Cleveland. Tracy also spent time in Argentina as an exchange student, and enjoyed the experience tremendously. Following Tracy's graduation from high school in 1983, the Washingtons moved back to Lebanon. Her first year back, Tina chose not to teach school, instead volunteering with Head Start and serving on their policy council. In 1984, she worked three-quarter time as a reading specialist in the middle school, as Troy was still attending school. Two years later, Tina served as a reading specialist at Henry Hauck Elementary School, resuming her activity with many of the community groups she affiliated with during her earlier years residing in Lebanon. She also served with the Soccer Booster Club at Cedar Crest High School until Troy's graduation in 1989. Tina jumped back into the classroom full-time, teaching fourth grade at Henry Hauck until 1991. She was nominated by a group of parents at her school for teacher of the year - and she was honored by receiving the National Teacher of the Year for the State of Pennsylvania in 1991. Leonard retired from the Lebanon Veteran's Administration Medical Center in the late 1990s and Tina retired from full time teaching in 2000 - but neither of them has slowed down the pace of their lives too much! Tina reports that teaching reading and reading remediation was her first love as an educator, closely followed by working with ADD and ADHD students.

Tina, as one of the first professional African American women in the Lebanon, did not shy away from teaching or joining organizations in a predominantly white community. She welcomed opportunities to educate others about African Americans her very first week in Lebanon by having the parents of her students observe her closely for two weeks. And the impact of being selected by three separate high school seniors honored for their scholastic achievements at the Excellent in Education banquet is quite an honor; an elementary school teacher chosen over all the other teachers each of those students had during their school years! Scholastically high-achieving students are selected from each high school in the county to attend this event, with their parent/s and the teacher of their choice; the cost of this event is underwritten by event sponsors, who are Chamber members.

Not only did she give 200% professionally, but she actively participated (and continues to do so) in many different organizations. Links, Inc. is a membership organization for over 10,000 professional women of color in 274 chapters located in 42 states and three countries, committed to being accomplished, dedicated women active in their community. The Links members are role models, mentors, activists and volunteers who work toward the realization of making the name "Links" not only a chain of friendship, but also a chain of purposeful service. Tina regularly travels to Harrisburg for their activities. Their support of teaching others about American culture through the hosting of foreign exchange students in their home is also commendable - and not just once and done, but hosting six different students! And her commitment to education hasn't wavered since her retirement. Realizing that post-secondary education is vital to self-esteem (and employment of) our young people, she serves on boards at both of Lebanon County's colleges. Tina and Leonard don't do anything half-heartedly, which has endeared them to our community!