

Annual employment fair scheduled for next week



The job fair will offer blue-collar and white-collar job seekers opportunities.

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

The job fair of job fairs will be up and running again soon, bringing dozens of employers together under one roof with thousands of local job-seekers.

The 2001 Employment Fair will be held at the Joel Coliseum Annex April 12. The event will stretch out for eight hours in order to give those who have jobs already a chance to pursue or merely inquire about other opportunities. On-site child care will also be offered so that parents can network without interference from their young ones. Spanish and sign language interpreters will be available as well.

The additional services are something that organizers are proud of. Shannon Boyd, a city employee based out of the Workforce Development Office and coordinator for the job fair, said many barriers that would keep residents away have been discussed thoroughly among organizers and in many cases have

been knocked down.

"We want to knock down all the reasons why people give for not looking for employment.... We didn't want to leave people with any excuses for not coming," he said.

The job fair is primarily sponsored by the city of Winston-Salem and GMAC Insurance. The city became involved about three years, in a move to consolidate the many smaller job fairs that existed at that time. Many of the agencies and companies that already partner with the city's Workforce Development agency will be on hand looking for employees at the fair. But hundreds of others have been invited to participate as well through a mass mailing.

"We are getting new (employers) signing on every day," Boyd said.

More than 100 employers are expected and thousands of job seekers usually show up. Some come because friends or relatives have had success in the past.

"We have someone who works

in our (human resources) department that was hired through the job fair," said Nigel Alston, manger employee/community relations at GMAC.

"There have been a lot of matches made at the fair."

Boyd said post-fair questionnaires show that hundreds have received jobs through the fair.

A series of seminars on job-related topics will be conducted every half-hour during the fair. The seminars, according to Alston, will provide job seekers with information on preparing resumes and on how to dress for interviews.

Employers will be looking for both blue and white collar workers at the event, Boyd said.

The Employment Fair will be held April 12 from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. at the LJV Coliseum Annex in Winston-Salem.

2001 Employment Fair Seminar Schedule

See Jobs on A4

Waffle House faces \$275 million discrimination lawsuit

BY JASON STRAIT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — Black customers who say they were refused service at a Tullahoma Waffle House — and captured the incident on videotape — have filed a \$275 million discrimination lawsuit against the restaurant.

The four plaintiffs say in their federal court suit they were locked out of the Waffle House by employees who claimed the restaurant was closed for maintenance, although white patrons were clearly visible inside and continued to be served.

Steve Berry of Tullahoma said he videotaped the late-night incident after the restaurant refused to serve him and other black customers the two previous weekends.

On the videotape, a Waffle House employee can be seen closing the restaurant's front door as Berry and others approach. An employee then taped a sign to the

glass door that read, "Closed due to Maintenance."

"Employees of the Tullahoma Waffle House ... simply locked the doors and pretended to be closed when they saw African-American patrons arrive," according to the lawsuit, which was filed last week in federal court.

Employees also lowered the restaurant's blinds, and at one point a white customer waved as Berry and other black patrons stood outside the restaurant. The incident occurred at 2:30 a.m. on Feb. 17, a Sunday.

Maurice Shaw, another plaintiff in the lawsuit, told the Tullahoma News that the restaurant did not close for maintenance as the company has claimed. Shaw did not immediately return a call to The Associated Press.

"If you're closed for maintenance, you send everybody out. They were still serving people. They hadn't slowed down a lick,"

he said.

Named as defendants in the lawsuit, filed last Friday in Winchester, Tenn., are Waffle House Inc.; SouthEast Waffles, LLC, which owns the Tullahoma restaurant; and the 10 employees who allegedly refused to serve the group.

Charles Yancey, director of human resources at SouthEast, said the restaurant shut down because the crowd had become unmanageable — not because it was black.

He said the Waffle House has a history of violence on Friday and Saturday nights and that it was not unusual for the restaurant to close as a matter of public safety.

"There had been previous instances of fights within the Waffle House at 3 o'clock. Those incidents are what made the employees feel we should close," he said.

In June, 13 people were arrested in a brawl at the Waffle House

that lasted for up to two hours, police said. The fight occurred at about the same time, around 3 a.m., as the February incident.

However, none of the four plaintiffs listed in the lawsuit was among those arrested in June. Additional plaintiffs include Mario Braston and Carla Childress, both of Tullahoma.

The lawsuit also claims that employees at the Waffle House have a history of "making racial slurs and of referring to African-American patrons in disparaging and derogatory ways."

In one incident, according to the lawsuit, a black customer who had called in a carryout order overheard a Waffle House worker say, "It's one of them wanting a to go order. What should I tell her?"

Waffle House, based in Norcross, Ga., has been named in at least four other racial discrimination lawsuits in the past few years, including incidents in Georgia,

Alabama and South Carolina.

It recently settled a discrimination lawsuit in Kentucky where three people from Illinois claimed workers at a Waffle House violated their civil rights by harassing, intimidating and refusing to serve them because they are black. The

company settled out of court for \$4.5 million.

Chris Jacobsen, spokesman for Waffle House, said he could not comment specifically on the Tullahoma case, but issued a statement saying Waffle House "does not tolerate discrimination of any kind."

NOTICE OF AN OPEN-HOUSE PUBLIC MEETING FOR THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE STONEY POINT ROAD (SR 1980, SOUTHERN LOOP) RAILROAD CROSSING

Project 9.908500P Crossing #470 200E Forsyth County

The North Carolina Department of Transportation will hold the above open-house public meeting on April 19, 2001 for the proposed closure of the southern loop of Stoney Point Road at the Norfolk Southern railroad.

An Open House Public Meeting will be held between the hours of 4:30 PM and 7:00 PM at the Auditorium of Walkertown Middle School located at 3175 Ruxton Drive in Walkertown.

Interested individuals may attend this meeting at their convenience between the above stated hours. NCDOT Division of Highways and Rail Division personnel will be available to provide information, answer questions and take comments regarding this closure. NO FORMAL PRESENTATION WILL BE MADE.

The proposed action would close the southern Stoney Point Road (SR 1980) crossing - NCDOT #470 200E - of the Norfolk Southern Railroad and create a landscaped turnaround. Eight freight trains per day currently use this route, each traveling approximately 35 miles per hour. This unsignalized crossing currently provides access to US 311 from Stoney Point Road (SR 1980). Traffic will be able to access US 311 using the northern Stoney Point Road crossing 0.33 miles north of the southern Stoney Point Road crossing. This crossing closure will prevent a dangerous situation of a curve that will be created by the realignment of the railroad when the construction work is completed that realigns US 311 where it crosses over the railroad.

This crossing closure is part of an effort to reduce the number of redundant and/or unsafe rail/highway at-grade crossings nationwide. Additional information on rail crossing safety can be found at the NCDOT Rail Division's Website - www.bytrain.org.

Anyone desiring more information about the public meeting may contact Ms. Ann Steedly, NCDOT Public Involvement, MSC 1583, Raleigh, NC 27699-1583; by phone at (919) 250-4092; by email at asteedly@dot.state.nc.us; or by Fax at (919) 250-4208.

Anyone desiring more information or who would like to comment about the proposed closure may contact Ms. Nancy Horne, NCDOT Rail Division, MSC 1556, Raleigh, NC 27699-1556; by phone at (919) 715-3686; or email at nhorne@dot.state.nc.us; or by FAX at (919) 715-8804.

NCDOT - in compliance with the American's With Disabilities Act - will provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled citizens who wish to participate in the hearing. To receive special services, please contact Ms. Steedly one week prior to the hearing.

The Chronicle: March 29; April 5, 12, 2001

WFU hosts Nobel Prize winner Author Walcott to speak, sign books



Walcott

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Nobel Prize-winning author Derek Walcott will offer a writing workshop, book-signing and talk April 10 at Wake Forest University. The events are free and open to the public.

Walcott is a poet, playwright, painter and literary critic. He has written 17 poetry collections, 12 plays and numerous articles on literary criticism. In 1992, he won the Nobel Prize for Literature for his poetry. He also co-wrote the 1998 Broadway show "The Capeman" with Paul

Simon.

He was born in 1930 in Castries, St. Lucia, in the Caribbean. Walcott's poetry reflects the diverse heritage of the Caribbean, which has been a melting pot of races, cultures, languages and histories since the 1500s. He is a product of that mix, having two white grandfathers and two black grandmothers.

The Wake Forest English Department will sponsor Walcott's poetry-writing workshop from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Tribble Hall, Room C-3. Walcott will review work submitted in advance by par-

ticipants. Space is limited and will be given on a first-come, first-served basis. Call Jane Mead at (336) 758-5382 to pre-register.

Walcott will sign copies of his books at the College Book Store from 3-4 p.m. Copies of "Collected Poems" and "Omeros," his newest poetry collection, will be on sale.

Walcott will also read his poetry in a program sponsored by the Wake Forest History Department at 7 p.m. in Benson University Center's Pugh Auditorium.

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Quotables:

"A government which uses force to maintain its rule teaches the oppressed to use force to oppose it."

- Nelson Mandela

FREE LEAF MULCH

The city will offer free loading of leaf mulch (as long as quantities last) on Saturday, April 7 from 8 a.m. - 3 p.m., at the Reynolds Park. Road. leaf site, behind Reynolds Park Recreation Center, 2450 Reynolds Pk. Rd.

From I-40, take Hwy. 52 south, take Stadium Dr. and left at top of ramp, take right onto M. L. King Jr. Dr., take left onto Reynolds Pk. Rd., after passing the recreation center, take immediate right onto paved street and proceed to enter fenced-in area.

For more information, call 727-8418.