

Coretta Scott King dedicates monument to late husband in Virginia

The widow of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. recently dedicated an oak tree and its marker in his honor in Richmond, Va., near the grounds of the Confederate seat of government.



King

"Oak trees represent strength, and my husband certainly had plenty of that," Coretta Scott King said during the brief ceremony. "This is especially significant to me because Virginia is the home state of many architects of American democracy."

It's also the home of the Confederacy. The memorial stands yards away from the site where Jefferson Davis was inaugurated as the first and last president of the pro-slavery coalition of Southern states that seceded the Union, causing the Civil War.

After the ceremony, Gov. Jim Gilmore gave her a \$75,000 grant to assist the Atlanta-based Martin Luther King Center for Nonviolent Social Change in the improvement of its Web site.

Black woman pleads guilty to harassing black fellow bus drivers

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — A black woman who worked as a school bus driver in suburban Grandview has pleaded guilty to harassing black co-workers by sending them racist leaflets.

Lee Hooker-Medlock, 37, entered her plea last week to one misdemeanor count of harassment and she was placed on probation for one year. As part of her plea agreement, three other harassment counts were dismissed.

Hooker-Medlock was a bus driver with the Grandview School District at the time the leaflets were sent anonymously in October. She and her husband received some of the leaflets.

Special conditions of her probation include continued mental counseling and no contact with the Grandview School District Bus Center.

Her attorney, Paul Katz, said she had been diagnosed with depression and "didn't really know what she was doing."

The leaflets were found on school buses and in office mailboxes of black drivers. They used a racial slur, and some threatened violence against blacks.

Post office named after Shinhoster

A post office in Decatur, Ga., has been named for Earl T. Shinhoster, an NAACP leader who died in a car accident in 2000.

In a statement, Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.), who sponsored the legislation, called the gesture "a fitting tribute to the legacy" of the former interim executive director of the NAACP.

She said that Shinhoster, a 30-year veteran of the civil rights organization, had "served his country and left the nation a better place than when he found it."

The 47-year-old Shinhoster became interim executive director of the NAACP when the Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. was ousted from the post in 1994 after a sexual and financial scandal. Kweisi Mfume, the current president and CEO, replaced him by the end of 1995.

Shinhoster died in Alabama when the car he was riding in skidded out of control near Montgomery, Ala., after a tire blowout.

House passes bill making first concrete move toward black-heritage museum

WASHINGTON — A proposal to create a national museum to recognize contributions of black Americans gained ground as the House of Representatives passed a bill to begin planning for the monument.

The measure, passed by voice vote, creates a presidential commission to handle planning and logistics for a National Museum of African-American History and Culture.

The 23-member commission would essentially be charged with creating a blueprint for the museum's eventual completion, lawmakers said.

Black lawmakers have long pushed for the museum. The commission, which would issue a report within nine months, is the closest to reality the proposal has come.

"I think the time is long past for a national African-American museum right here in our capital city," said Rep. John Lewis. The Democrat has introduced legislation to establish a black heritage museum every year for the last 12 years.

"This presidential commission is a step, a necessary step in the right direction to preserve the rich history of African Americans," said Lewis, a major civil rights leader during the mid-20th century era of protests.

Republican Rep. J.C. Watts, co-author of the proposal with Lewis, said the museum's "existence would serve a needed purpose by demonstrating the significance of African-American history to American history."

Members of the Senate have yet to take up the bill.

— From Staff and Wire Reports



Watts

WSSU moves to fix housing shortage

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Winston-Salem State University has put a new, state-of-the-art student residential complex on the fast track.

School officials say unexpected and unprecedented growth over the last couple of years makes the new building a necessity. The school's next freshman class will be 625, the largest in school in history. Past surges in enrollment have left school officials scrambling to find shelter for students.

Chancellor Harold Martin said the new residential complex is the first step toward eliminating those problems.

"We will also, in the future, bring up to par other residence halls on campus," Martin said last week after a ground-breaking ceremony for the new \$17.6 million residential complex, which is being tentatively called "Rams Commons."

The facility is slated to feature 150 units in three- and four-story "apartment-style" buildings. There will be 448 beds, a community center, recreation and fitness rooms, a computer lab, study rooms, retail space and even a classroom.

"We will be offering classes in the residence hall," Martin said.

Plans also include having a Starbucks coffee shop in the building.

The facility is being constructed on the west side of Martin Luther King Drive between the school's health sciences



Winston-Salem State University officials take part in the ground-breaking ceremony last week for a new state-of-the-art dormitory that should open in August 2002.

building, which is undergoing an expansion, and a popular residential hall. "Rams Commons" will be the university's first privatized residential hall. The complex is being financed through the sale of bonds by the school's housing foundation.

The university received more than \$40 million as part of the university bonds passed by state voters last year. But the school is not expected to receive funds earmarked for building residences halls until several years from now.

Martin said not having to rely on state allocations to finance the dorm helped move the project along more quickly. The university was also able to break the mold in terms of the traditional look and features of dorms.

"These will be some of the finest residence facilities that you will find anywhere in the country," Martin said.

The facility is expected to be completed by August of next year, just in time to accommodate students next school year.

Student body president Camille Akande is a senior and, therefore, won't be able to make use of the new facility. But she says she is excited about the opportunities it will provide underclassmen and incoming Rams.



Workers clear space on the west side of Martin Luther King Drive to construct the new dorm, Rams Commons.

"The students are very excited about this," she said. "There has been a need for (some) time for residence halls, and now we are making it a priority."

Akande was among the WSSU delegation that toured other privatized dorms at colleges to see what the university could expect.

The university also plans to use the new facility to market WSSU to potential students who are looking for more than an education and an excellent social climate.

"The new Winston-Salem State University is taking shape and really becoming a critical part of our city....And there is more to come," said Brenda Diggs, chair of the university's board of trustees.

Austin, Texas-based American Campus Communities is constructing the new facility. The company will also manage the facility. ACC has already built similar dorms at 13 universities throughout the country. The WSSU project is ACC's first in the Carolinas.

Member of former EAC leaving chamber

FROM STAFF REPORTS

At least one member of the former East Area Council has informed Gayle Anderson, president of the Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce, that she will not renew her chamber membership because of a decision made by Anderson and other chamber staffers to convert the council, a wing of the chamber for African-American business owners, into a minority business council, which will be more inclusive of other minorities such as Hispanics and Asians.

In a letter sent to Anderson earlier this week, Theldora Williams, owner of TES Engraving & Sign Co., stated several reasons for not renewing her chamber membership, including comments Anderson made last week in The Chronicle. EAC members say that

they were not informed that the chamber was considering doing away with the council until it was announced two weeks ago. Anderson said that she told officials eight months ago about the possibility. In her letter, Williams said that is not true.

"For the record, as secretary of the East Area Council Board of Directors, my notes do not reflect any message from you regarding that. Furthermore, note that if it had been said, there would have been discussion among the board members during one (of) the meetings that you attended," Williams said in her letter.

Williams also took issue with Anderson's comment in The Chronicle that the EAC was unable to draw people to its meetings because it utilized the same speakers at events. Williams said only once did the

EAC use the same speaker twice. Williams added that because the costs of EAC meetings were covered solely by EAC members, the chamber was not losing money regardless of whether "10 or 200" people attended EAC meetings.

Williams reminded Anderson of all the good things the EAC did for the community, including setting up a \$30,000 scholarship endowment fund for Winston-Salem State University students. When the decision was made to end the EAC, Williams said members were in the midst of an ambitious project to use \$11,000 (money the EAC raised independently from the chamber) to purchase laptop computers for business students at WSSU.

"It's hard for our group to carry through with that gift when you have disbanded us," Williams said. "I was a mem-

ber because of the good things. What's happening now is not good. And not being able to use our hard-earned money to give those laptop computers makes me feel cheated and used."

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The Chronicle (USPS 067-910) was established by Ernest H. Pitt and Ndubisi Egemonye in 1974 and is published every Thursday by Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co., Inc., 617 N. Liberty Street, Winston-Salem, NC 27101. Periodicals postage paid at Winston-Salem, N.C. Annual subscription price is \$30.72.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636
Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1636

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