

N.C. Black Repertory Company to hold MLK Birthday Celebration

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The N.C. Black Repertory Company will present its 17th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration on Jan. 15 at 7 p.m. in the Arts Council Theatre, 610 Coliseum Drive. The event is free but reservations are required. Call 723-2266 to make reservations.



Hamlin

The event will feature some of the Triad's most talented artists, including some of the exquisite singing cast from the soulful, gospel Christmas musical "Black Nativity," which took the city of Winston-Salem by storm in December. Singers from the cast include Bishop John Heath, Twana Gilliam, Beathy

Heath, Jamera Rogers, Brandy Hunter, Sharon Heath, Carlotta Samuels-Fleming and Kenneth Mallette.

Other guest artists who will perform include the Expressions (an all-female singing group) and Bill Jackson. Youth performances will be provided by the Glory Phi Steppers of Greater Cleveland Avenue Christian Church and the Boss Drummers of Winston Lake YMCA.

A special performance of Dr. King's "I Have A Dream" will be performed by Rev. Kedrick Lowery of Greater Cleveland Avenue Christian Church, where Lowery serves as the minister of youth.

Larry Leon Hamlin, producer and artistic director of the National Black Theatre Festival and the N.C. Black Repertory Company, will make a special appearance. He is one of the most important artists and leaders in the "Global Black Theatre Movement."

Brian McLaughlin of WXII-TV 12 will host the event.



Local entertainer and actor Bill Jackson performs at last year's event. He and many others are expected this year.

Workers

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looking in on the people hovering around the transportation center, where buses zipped in and out throughout the day.

"We are still walking around downtown, patrolling and making sure the people that are here are fine," Peterson said.

Like the police officer, James McKeever III knows that he can't roll over once the alarm sounds on a snow day. As a bus driver for the city Transit Authority, McKeever says he has other people's plans to consider.

"We have got to (go to work). We have got to get there because people depend on us," he said as he prepared to shuttle riders.

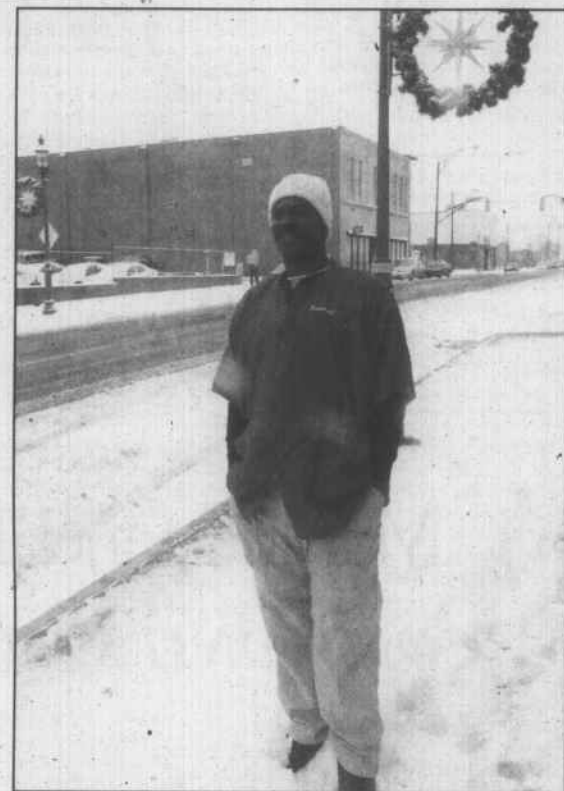
His bus was not full, like on most days. Only a handful of people scurried onto the bus when he pulled into the transportation center.

"Some said they have to go to work; some are just trying to get to the stores," McKeever said, describing his passengers' motivations for riding the bus.

The Transit Authority gives drivers special training to help them move the buses along safely on icy roads. McKeever, a former truck driver, said that he did not run into any problems, although his route takes him from downtown to along Silas Creek Parkway and back downtown again.

Some would say that Howard Wright and his crew at the Downtown Deli and Cafe did not have the same obligation as Peterson and McKeever to be at work during the inclement weather. But Wright, the manager at the popular eatery, would disagree.

"We feel that it's an obliga-



Emanuel Mickens Jr. looks for potential customers while standing outside of Delight Barber Shop on Liberty Street.

tion to be here no matter what it takes," he said. "Snow does not stop you; rain does not stop you."

The Downtown Deli and Cafe has been open on Fourth Street for about a year, but has been downtown for more than a decade. Fewer burgers, omelets, and bowls of soup were served last week during the snow-induced near-shutdown of downtown, but Wright said those who

made their way to work were delighted that the deli's "open" sign was glowing brightly.

"We may not make as much as we would on a pretty day, but these customers are satisfied and grateful that we are here," Wright said.

Charles Dolg didn't have hot cups of coffee, tea and cocoa to offer customers as Wright did. But he had a commodity that was

just as sought after last Thursday.

"I have ice melter to sell," Dolg said with a chuckle when asked why he decided to open his store, Clean Daze, on a snow day.

The cleaning supply company has been at its Liberty Street location for about five months. Dolg sold a few containers of the ice melter to downtown merchants who wanted potential customers to walk into their stores rather than slide in. Dolg even delivered some of the ice melter to business owners who did not feel comfortable taking their chances outdoors.

A Connecticut native, Dolg didn't hesitate when asked to make a delivery.

"A little bit of snow does not bother me as much," Dolg said.

Emanuel Mickens Jr. may not have years of experience in driving on ice and snow-covered roads, but his four-wheel drive vehicle more than compensated for that. Mickens put his SUV to good use as he made his way downtown to open Delight Barber Shop.

Mickens put on his smock and arranged his clippers just as he would do on any day, but customers were nowhere to be found. Mickens spent much of the morning standing outside of the shop, hoping to serve as an advertisement to potential customers that he was open for business.

"I got a job to do. I have got to keep the place running," Mickens said when asked what he was doing at work.

When it was pointed out to Mickens that most of his neighbors, including several other barber and beauty shops, were closed, Mickens looked around, grinned and said, "That means more money for me, then."

MLK events

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State, and will start at 7:30 a.m. and end at 9:30 a.m., which will give attendees enough time to head to Mount Zion Baptist Church for the annual MLK Day March, which will start at around 10:45 a.m. In the past, the event has drawn thousands of city residents of all faiths, ages and colors. Marchers will walk from the church, on File Street, up Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and down Fifth Street into the heart of downtown. The march is sponsored by the Ministers Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity and usually features prominent city leaders and members of respected civic organizations.

The march will end at Benton Convention Center at

about the same time the MLK Noon Hour Commemoration is set to begin. This will be the 22nd year the commemoration has been held in honor of King. The event is sponsored by WAAA radio.

The theme for this year's ceremony will be "Remember! Celebrate!! Act!!!" and will feature Brad Braxton, a religion professor at Wake Forest University School of Divinity. The commemoration will begin at noon and last about two hours.

All events are free and open to the public. To reserve space at the prayer breakfast, call (336) 722-8624. Look for other MLK Day events and stories related to the King legacy in The Chronicle's Martin Luther King Jr. special section, which will be published next week.

Nursing

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Forest University School of Medicine, has developed a Free College, Free Health program for under-represented minority students that aims to expose them to various health career options such as nursing.

According to Means, 84 percent of the students who participate in this program declare a health career major by the time they enter college. Means commented on the impact of visible minority health care professionals and the need to recruit them to serve that portion of health care clients.

Means is pleased with the programs and how they seem to be assisting participants. He does, however, hope that more agencies like AHEC can collaborate more smoothly in the future in order to provide adequate preparation for minority candidates.

"(AHEC) tries to expose students to careers with the most shortages, and nursing is one of those careers," Means said. "It's so important to build partnerships and collaborate with other agencies so that students' needs are met. A lot of one-time programs exist and are nice, but the most effective way is long-term exposure and mentoring for students."

Ann Potter, family nurse practitioner for the N.C. School of the Arts, attributes the feared shortage to long-held stereotypes about nursing - such as it being a "woman's job" - and the issue of poor pay.

Although Potter is not and probably will not be directly affected by the shortage because she works on a small staff, she believes the sign-on bonuses that many hospitals are offering and the increase in flexible hours will help boost the number of people to enter the field. Potter says that many of her colleagues from nursing school did not pursue the career for very long after graduating in the 1970s due to conflicts with juggling long shifts with family life.

According to Potter, typical shifts nurses are expected to work can range anywhere from four to eight hours a day.

"There is a stereotype out there that says that men can't be nurses and that nurses can't make a decent living now. Flexible schedules and better salaries exist now and that will definitely help recruit more nurses," Potter said.

NCCN hopes the public relations campaign, coupled with statewide conferences and programs as well as recruitment grants such as the \$50,000 awarded to state hospitals and agencies, will make the biggest contributions to the campaign.

The center has also designed a Web site that provides much information on scholarships, incentives and benefits for individuals interested in attending nursing schools. The site has been live for more than a month now and is presented in such a way that children can maneuver around it and understand the information provided. Sherrod hopes the site will be helpful to employers and employees in the medical profession so as to meet and assist with workplace needs as well.

Although health care professionals strive to be crisis oriented in times of shortages, duplication tends to ensue when trying to inform, recruit and retain medical personnel. Sherrod emphasized NCCN's intention to coordinate activities to maximize use of efforts and resources wherever recruitment is taking place.

"Compare (the NCCN) to sister states and you will notice that our vacancy rates in hospitals are lower than these other states," Sherrod said about the status of North Carolina's campaign.

According to Sherrod, North Carolina has one of the best scholarship programs in the nation, pumping nearly \$4 million into programs such as the Nurse Scholars Program, merit-based scholarships for graduating high school students, and the Nursing Education Scholarship Loan Program, financial scholarships.

"Our goal is to increase people's awareness on facts about nursing," Sherrod said.

If you or your child would like more information on the N.C. nursing campaign, go to the Web site www.nurseNC.org.

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