

BUSINESS FOCUS

Briefs

Commission appoints new member

The Greater Winston-Salem Sports Commission has appointed Edward V. Zotian as a member of the commission. Zotian becomes one of only three commission appointees.

The recommendation and appointment were announced at the Sports Commission meeting July 10.

Zotian is an attorney and member of the law firm Maready-Zotian, PLLC in Winston-Salem.

"We are pleased to strengthen the Greater Winston-Salem Sports Commission with Edward Zotian," noted Mark Doughton, commission chairman. "Edward's comprehensive understanding of what the commission does will greatly benefit us."

Zotian received B.S. and M.B.A. degrees from the University of Connecticut and a J.D. degree from Wake Forest University School of Law.

He lives in Clemmons.

Lincoln signs Magic Johnson to multiyear endorsement deal

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP) — Earvin "Magic" Johnson, former Michigan State star and professional basketball great, has agreed to a multiyear endorsement deal with Ford Motor Co.'s Lincoln Mercury division, company officials said.

Lincoln Mercury turned to Johnson in an attempt to project a more youthful and energetic image. The two automotive brands have seen falling sales and financial losses in recent years while struggling to attract younger buyers.

Ford described the deal as a "multidimensional marketing relationship" that will include television and print advertisements along with cross-promotions.

Johnson, a Lansing native, was one of the sports world's most prolific celebrity endorsers before he announced in 1991 that he contracted the HIV virus and was retiring from professional basketball.

Johnson, 43, has rebounded, though, becoming a successful entrepreneur of movie theaters, shopping malls, restaurants and health clubs.

"Magic is a very credible spokesperson," said Jim Sanfilippo, a vice president with AMCI, an automotive marketing firm in Detroit. "He has overcome personal adversity, and he is quite a successful businessman."

Johnson could help attract younger buyers to the Lincoln Mercury brands. The average age of a Lincoln buyer is over 60, and the brand hopes to draw more baby boomers in their 40s and 50s.

Johnson played two years for Michigan State, leading the Spartans to the national championship in 1979. He helped win five championships in 13 seasons with the Los Angeles Lakers and was named one of the 50 greatest players in NBA history in 1996.

Bank gives \$1 million to NAACP

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People announced last week a \$1 million contribution from Wachovia Corp. A substantial portion of the contribution is designated to support the organization's educational initiatives.

Wachovia was recognized in 2002 as the recipient of the NAACP's Daisy Bates Educational Advocacy Award for Corporate Leadership.

The NAACP's National Call for Action in Education requested that governors and state education agencies develop a five-year Education Equity Plan to reduce the education-related racial disparities by at least 50 percent by 2006.

Currently, 47 states have responded to the NAACP's call.

The NAACP Brown v. Board Equity Commission, launched in 2003, includes representatives from more than 50 national civil rights, social, professional, collegiate, research, corporate and philanthropic organizations. The Brown Equity Commission is charged with assessing and reporting on progress toward the fulfillment of the Supreme Court's goal of equity in education as set forth in the Brown decision.

Griffis opens law office

John W. Griffis Jr. has opened a business law office in downtown Winston-Salem after living and practicing corporate and commercial law in New York, London and Saudi Arabia for many years.

Griffis' practice is local and international in scope and is focused largely on corporate, commercial and financial transactions. His background includes extensive experience with new business formation, commercial contracts and agreements and mergers.

Griffis has worked with lawyers, barristers and solicitors in New York and London and in many other cities throughout the world after beginning his career as an individual practitioner in Lexington and Denton.

Griffis shares office space in the old YMCA Building, 315 N. Spruce Street, Suite 250, with R. Kenneth Babb and Wayne H. Foushee.

Griffis received B.A. (1966) and J.D. (1967) degrees from Wake Forest University and an LL.M. degree from New York University in 1969.

Griffis is the son of the late Dr. John W. Griffis Sr. and Kathryn Sexton Foy, and is a native of Denton.

NAACP: Retail not kind to blacks

BY JOHN PAIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. — The retail industry does a poor job of hiring and promoting blacks and gets a low grade for its marketing and charitable work for the black community, the NAACP said last week in its first ranking of the sector.

The retailers got an overall grade of D in the report released at the NAACP's annual convention. The highest grade was A, while F was the lowest. The highest score was a C+, awarded to Wal-Mart Stores Inc.

"It is very obvious that in that industry the time for change is now," said NAACP President Kweisi Mfume. But he noted that most industries did poorly in the first year the NAACP ranked them.

Three retailers — Dillard's Inc., Kohl's Department Stores and Nordstrom Inc. — got F's. Of those three, only Dillard's responded to the survey that ranked 45 large companies on employment, marketing, procurement, community reinvestment and charitable donations. Using information from the companies, the survey measured how much of those activities were done with blacks.

"Retailers are making progress in their diversity efforts. We do acknowledge, however, that we do have a long way to go. Unfortunately change doesn't happen overnight," said Scott Krugman, a spokesman for the National Retail Federation.

Nordstrom spokeswoman Brooke White said her company couldn't complete the survey within the two weeks required by the NAACP. But she defended Nordstrom, saying it is a partner with the civil rights group in black youth programs across the nation.

The other two failing companies did not return calls for comment July 15.

"To those companies that did poorly: Watch out, we are coming your way," Mfume said. He noted that blacks have \$500 billion in collective spending power and asked them to "withhold their consumer dollars" from low-scoring companies.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People also released similar reports July 15 on three other industries: lodging, telecommunications and banking. All three of the industries received C's and have been ranked for years.

Mfume had one main complaint for each of those three: Banks don't



Marriott named best by NAACP

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

WASHINGTON — The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People announced it has ranked Marriott first among 12 hospitality companies included in the NAACP's annual lodging industry report. The hotel chain was cited for demonstrating industry leadership in several diversity-related areas, including board membership, supplier diversity, franchising, and the hiring, retention and promotion of minorities.

Marriott is the only hotel company to top the list for five years.

"Our relationship with organizations such as the NAACP plays a very important role in our continued growth and commitment to diversity," said J.W. Marriott Jr., chairman and CEO, Marriott International Inc. "We are pleased to be ranked as the industry leader again."

Marriott's Supplier Diversity

Initiative was the first program in the industry to institute a supplier-diversity program and continues to lead the industry. In 2002, Marriott purchased \$177 million in goods and services from businesses owned by minorities and women, nearly a threefold increase since the company's supplier diversity program was launched five years ago.

As of March 2003, the Marriott International Franchise Network included 220 minority-owned franchised properties and has more than doubled the number of women- and minority-owned franchises in the past five years.

At Marriott, minorities occupy more than 50 percent of all supervisory positions and 11 percent of all general manager positions. This year Marriott International was also again named to two of Fortune's top lists: "Best Companies to Work for" and "Best Companies for Minorities."

give enough mortgages to blacks, telecommunications companies don't name enough black board members, and hotels don't have enough black property owners.

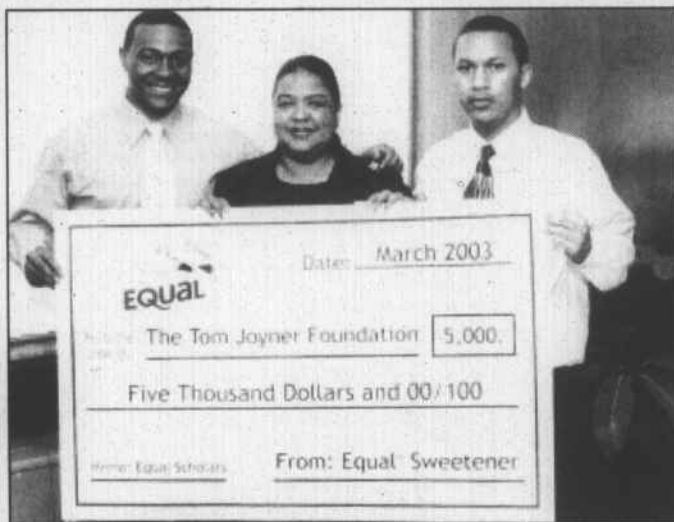
Bank One Corp. flunked after the company did not respond for the second straight year. Bank One spokesman Thomas A. Kelly declined comment.

Mfume said he would buy stock in Bank One so he could attend shareholders meetings and confront executives about what he said was their lack of interest in the black community.

Qwest Communications International Inc. got a D, but company officials said the grade does not reflect efforts by its new management team to promote diversity.

"We are not satisfied with our D rating and we are committed to improve our score through programs that support diversity," spokesman Chris Hardman said.

Top scorers in each category were Marriott International Inc. with a B in lodging; Wachovia Corp., J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., and Bank of America Corp., each with a B- in banking; and BellSouth Corp., Verizon Communications and AT&T Corp., each with a B in telecommunications.



D'Angelo King (left) and Shlonte McGee (right) are congratulated by St. Augustine's President Dianne Boardley Suber.

Sweeeeeet

St. Aug's students receive laptops, scholarships from makers of Equal

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

CHICAGO — Merisant Co., whose products include Equal and Canderel, and the Equal Foundation have partnered with the Tom Joyner Foundation to create the Equal Scholars Program, a branded scholarship fund benefiting students who attend historically black colleges and universities and are business or culinary arts majors.

D'Angelo King of Charlotte and Shlonte McGee of San Francisco — the program's first recipients — attend St. Augustine's College in Raleigh and received \$1,500 scholarships and laptop computers. The scholarships are awarded based on financial need and academic achievement.

King, a sophomore and computer science major, said he will put his award to good use as he pursues a career as a project manager at a major computer corporation. McGee, a junior and business administration major, aspires to start his own dry-cleaning business in Southern California.

"I was excited when I heard that I won," McGee said, adding that some of his classmates heard the announcement on "The Tom Joyner

Morning Show." "The first thing I did was to call my mother."

St. Augustine's President Dianne Boardley Suber, the college's first female president, also is elated that her school was selected to be the first-ever recipient of the Equal Scholars Program. "I think this is tremendous," Suber said. "Many of our students have tons of potential, and every opportunity to help them grow is a slam dunk. Usually schools like St. Augustine's are overlooked by major corporations because they're so small, so this partnership with Equal is very important to us and our mission."

Students from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Voorhees College in South Carolina also received donations recently. Six additional schools are slated to benefit from the program later this year. These schools include Elizabeth City State University, Livingstone College and Morehouse College.

"By sponsoring the Equal Scholars Program, Merisant and the Equal Foundation demonstrate dedication to helping these future black leaders achieve their dreams with a higher education," said Ken Jones, vice president of global integration for Merisant.

Suit accuses Labor Ready of discrimination

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JACKSON, Tenn. — A federal lawsuit against Labor Ready claims the temporary employment firm failed to promote blacks into management positions and retaliated against whites who reported discrimination.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission office in Memphis filed the discrimination lawsuit on behalf of five black and three white plaintiffs and claims the discrimination occurred in the Memphis and Jackson offices, of Tacoma, Wash.-based Labor Ready.

"We are an equal opportunity employer," said Stacey Burke, Labor Ready spokeswoman. "We will cooperate fully in the investigation. Beyond that, I can't comment more."

Plaintiff Raymond Terry told The Jackson Sun that Labor Ready area executives wanted only white managers in the stores.

"I have never seen anything like this before. The racism was blatant," Terry said. "When they hired me, they said they wanted team players. Because I was white, they assumed I would be prejudiced against blacks, I suppose."

Terry said he was following "company policy to report any instances of discrimination on the job" when he and two others from Jackson lodged complaints with Labor Ready's corporate office in 2000.

Terry said his work then came under greater scrutiny and he eventually was fired.

The lawsuit also said Robert Herron, another plaintiff, was fired as a Labor Ready customer service representative after he complained of discrimination when three white women were promoted in Memphis. Herron had told his boss he wanted to become a manager and "was as, or more, qualified for the positions," the complaint said.

The suit is a class-action lawsuit, and new plaintiffs could be added, said Faye Williams, an EEOC attorney.

The complaint asks the court to demand Labor Ready cease its discriminatory promotion practices and provide back pay for the eight employees.