

News at a glance

Ott tapped as Austin's first black city manager

AUSTIN (NNPA/Nokoa) — Austin has been abuzz with anticipation of the city's first African-American city manager. He is Fort Worth Assistant City Manager Marc Ott.



Ott

Two African-American finalists were under consideration, Ott and Jelynn Burley, San Antonio's Deputy City Manager. Ott has been confirmed as the council's choice.

Ott said one of his most cherished goals has long been to manage one of the premiere cities in the nation.

"Austin is one of the premiere cities in the country, wouldn't you agree?"

Ott said. He said he believed that his leadership style would make Austin known as one of the greatest managed cities in the United States.

He praised the vision and leadership of the city council and said he would make it his priority to make sure the city's priorities are carried out.

Ott has held every classification under city manager.

Unlike cities with strong mayors, Austin is led by a city manager who answers to the mayor and six council members somewhat equally. During the consideration process, many African-Americans in the audience viewed the choice between the two African-American candidates as a win-win situation.

Sierra Leone joins African neighbors to save forests

(NNPA/GIN) — Sierra Leone has joined the Ivory Coast, Guinea and Liberia in an effort to control loggers from plundering forests for their valuable natural resources.

"They just invaded and started doing what they felt like doing," Forestry Minister Joseph Sam Sesay said of Chinese and other foreign companies, in a BBC interview.

Cut logs were being cut and exported raw without value addition and benefit to the country, he said.

A new forestry policy is being developed. Meanwhile, the 75,000 acre Gola Forest — home to 50 species of mammals, including leopards, chimpanzees and forest buffalos — has been declared a new national park.

'White' college advertisement turns off some African Americans

JANESVILLE, Wis. (AP) — Blackhawk Technical College employs a diversity specialist and hosts an annual Diversity Week to help make minority students feel welcome.

But a recent advertisement sent to local homes may have unintentionally undercut its efforts.

The cover of the magazine-style publication featured a photograph of two smiling adults and two children under the following headline: "A Family Affair: BTC is the perfect fit for the White family."



Leavy

Most people may have understood the article was about a family named White. But some read it as an assertion the college was particularly good for white people.

Bob Baldwin, a diversity specialist for the Janesville School District, who is black, said most black people would have a problem with the wording.

"That's kind of a natural thing — when you're white, you don't think about these things," Baldwin said. "And people need to start thinking about these things beyond their own comfort level — you know, what about the other folks?"

But Blackhawk Technical College board member Kevin Leavy, a black businessman who sits on the Beloit City Council, said he didn't think anyone intended any harm.

College president Eric Larson said he didn't think of the double meaning before the advertisement was published. But the college received some complaints afterward, he said.

The college changed the headline in a version on its Web site: "BTC is the perfect fit for the James and Casey White family."

Cosby talks positive parenting at MLK scholarship breakfast

CHICAGO (AP) — Comedian Bill Cosby says successful parents make it clear they want their children to succeed. He says that message wasn't there for people who are failing.

Cosby spoke at the Reverend Jesse Jackson's annual scholarship breakfast to honor the Martin Luther King Junior holiday.

Cosby has been criticized and accused of elitism and reinforcing stereotypes for rebuking black parents and people in low-income situations — who he says are failing the civil rights movement by "not holding up their end in this deal."

But he received a warm reception at the morning event in Chicago.

Cosby told the audience that some people have children without intending to help them succeed in life. He cited as an example absent fathers who aren't around to give positive messages to their children.

Restoration sought for Harlem's Apollo Theater

BY SAMANTHA GROSS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Back in the Apollo Theater's heyday, audience members walked through an ornate, spacious lobby. Inside the theater, hand-painted detailing decorated the walls. And on the stage, stars were born.

Supporters have long tried to restore the Harlem landmark to those golden days of the 1930s and '40s, when unknown teenagers Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan launched their careers at the theater's "Amateur Night."

Now, after years of struggling to finance an expansion and restoration, theater officials are beginning a national fundraising effort for what they are calling the "final phase" of the renovation.

The \$47 million project calls for doubling the size of the theater lobby, building a grand staircase at its center and replacing its wall-mounted columns and marble wainscoting. Work inside the theater would include repainting the colorful, intricate patterns on the walls and restoring box seats.

Under the Apollo Theater Foundation's plan, the names of musical legends would be memorialized on bronze plaques in a walk of fame in front of the venue. A revamped third-floor performance space would be placed in front of the building's windows, allowing passers-by a



peek inside. The foundation also aims to raise \$12 million for an endowment.

The nonprofit organization already has spent \$37 million to replace the theater's seats and stage and restore its famous marquee, said Jonelle Procope, the foundation president.

Architect Christopher Cowan said his firm was basing its restoration on the Apollo of the mid-1930s, when the whites-only theater was opened to blacks. The theater was built in 1914.

"In a way, you'll be stepping back in time to experience the Apollo in its heyday," Cowan said. "That's the period of cultural significance for the Apollo. It became a center for jazz. It had amazing performers."

The foundation plans to raise cash for the project through appeals in Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Washington and New York.

"The Apollo has been the venue in which so much of American culture has been created and demonstrated to the world," said Dick Parsons, chairman of Time Warner Inc. and the theater's board of directors. "We still want it to be a place where stars are born and legends are made and culture is disseminated."

Planners say they expect the project to be completed by the end of 2010.

Striking writers OK a waiver for upcoming NAACP Image Awards

Strike has already caused changes to several awards shows

BY OLU ALEMORU
LOS ANGELES WAVE

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) — The 39th NAACP Image Awards are scheduled to go ahead as planned Feb. 14, after the show was given a waiver last week by the West Coast board of the Writers Guild of America. The guild is in the midst of a months-long strike which has already crippled the Golden Globe Awards and the People's Choice Awards.

"The guild examines each request like this individually and no decision is easy," said WGA West President Patrick M. Verrone, whose union is now in the tenth week of a crippling strike against major movie and television producers. "Our ultimate goal is to resolve this strike by achieving a good contract. Because of the historic role the NAACP has played in struggles like ours, we think this decision is appropriate to jointly achieve our goals."

In recent days, the union made headlines by refusing to grant a similar waiver to the Academy Awards — scheduled for Feb. 24 — in the wake of the cancellation of the traditional Golden Globes ceremony.

The Image Awards celebrate the achievements and performances of people of color in the arts and individuals and groups who promote social justice.

The announcement of the waiver was made at a press conference held at WGA headquarters in the Fairfax District. Among those in attendance were Image Awards Committee Chair Clayola Brown, executive producer Vicangelo Bullock, and WGA writers Mara Brock Akil ("Girlfriends") and Robert Eisele ("The Great Debaters"). Akil praised both parties involved.

"The NAACP and the Guild have been at the forefront of hiring diverse writers



Mara Brock Akil

and fighting for what is right," she said.

The interim agreement with the Image Awards, scheduled Feb. 14 at the Shrine Auditorium, will allow the hiring of WGA writers to script the show and means there will be no picketing of the event by striking writers. In addition, the Guild granted a waiver permitting the use of clips from motion pictures and television programs.

According to a report by

NBC News, the strike, prompted by guild members' desire for a greater share of revenue for work streamed over the Internet, is estimated to have cost the local entertainment industry more than \$1 billion. This takes into consideration a combination of lost wages to cast and crew members of television and film productions and payments for services provided by caterers, prop and costume rental companies.

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HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOCUS GROUPS

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth Housing Consortium will hold focus group sessions to obtain views on housing and community development needs and strategies. Input will be used in development of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan for 2009-2013 and for the program year beginning July 1, 2008. Staff also will report on five-year and current year program performance. Representatives from neighborhood organizations, service providers and any other interested individuals are invited to attend.

Focus Group Topic	Date	Time
• Affordable Housing	Feb. 5, 2008	8:30-10:30 AM
• Homeless & Special Needs Housing	Feb. 5, 2008	2:00-4:00 PM
• Community Revitalization	Feb. 7, 2008	2:00-4:00 PM
• Community Revitalization (repeat of afternoon session)	Feb. 7, 2008	7:00-9:00 PM

Sessions will be held in the Winston Room of the LJV Coliseum. For more information or appropriate and necessary auxiliary aids and services, contact Marcia Dinkins at 727-8597. Persons requiring TDD service may call 727-8319.

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