

News at a Glance

Save those Obama, McCain buttons

LITTLE FALLS, Minn. (AP) – Now that the elections are over, you may be tempted to toss that yard sign or campaign button.

But one collector says you might want to keep them. The market is hot for campaign memorabilia, especially from historic elections like the one last week that saw Democrat Barack Obama elected the nation's first African-American president.

Election memorabilia collector Todd Kosovich says items from elections that had something special happen in them "hold value much more."

If buyers want to cash in later, they should pay attention to who produces the memorabilia and how rare it is, Kosovich said. He said the market is so saturated right now with Obama and GOP presidential nominee John McCain items that there is not much value in them, but that will change over time. "Ultimately anything is valuable," he said.

Kosovich, a Morrison County assistant attorney, has items from each presidential campaign dating back to 1896. Mostly he collects buttons – he has about 800 of them – but he also has posters, postcards and other memorabilia.

Newspapers, convention delegate and media credentials and convention tickets also are valuable, he says.

A&F trying to be minority-friendly after massive discrimination settlement

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) – Four years after spending \$50 million to settle a number of employment discrimination lawsuits, Abercrombie & Fitch says it's making progress with diversity in its hiring.

The New Albany, Ohio-based teen apparel retailer hired an executive in 2004 to track minority hiring in stores. The company has also incorporated more faces of color into its in-house "look book" depicting the "Abercrombie look," as required by a consent decree by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Abercrombie has sponsored diversity events and has started a Diversity Management continuing studies program with Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

But the commission isn't giving Abercrombie high marks for its diversity efforts.

The attorney who monitored Abercrombie's case in a report last year said he couldn't find that the company made "best efforts" in achieving diversity, the standard required by the consent decree.

But Todd Corley, who joined Abercrombie in 2004 as the company's vice president of diversity and inclusion, said some of the diversity initiatives he oversees go beyond what is required in the consent decree.

The company hires minority "secret shoppers" to go into stores and report on their experience.

"If a black guy goes in and is only allowed to take in one thing to try on, and a white guy is allowed to bring in three things, that gets around," Corley said. "That also affects your ability to hire."

Town elects transgender mayor

SILVERTON, Ore. (AP) – Plenty of politicians reinvent themselves. But none quite like Mayor-elect Stu Rasmussen.

Rasmussen, 60, has been a fixture in Silverton politics for more than 20 years, and had twice before been the mayor of this small city 45 miles south of Portland. Those terms, however, were before the breast implants and before the once-discreet crossdresser started wearing dresses and 3-inch high heels in public.

In a week when America loudly chose its first African-American president, Silverton quietly made Rasmussen the country's first openly transgender mayor, according to the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, a group that works to help openly lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people win elected office.

Rasmussen unseated incumbent mayor Ken Hector, with whom he had long clashed – 1,988 votes to 1,512.

Rasmussen speaks in his decidedly masculine voice. Though he dresses more like Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, Rasmussen describes himself with a word assigned to Todd Palin.

"I am a dude," he said. "I am a heterosexual male who appears to be a female."

His longtime live-in girlfriend, Victoria Sage, told The Oregonian newspaper that she and Rasmussen have been an item for almost 35 years.

Trooper reinstated after investigation

RALEIGH (AP) – A North Carolina Highway Patrol officer demoted for using a racial slur is getting his job back.

WRAL-TV reported that an administrative judge made the ruling Friday concerning First Sgt. Mitch Foard. The Highway Patrol took action after they said Foard used the slur in a message left on a former trooper's cell phone last year.

Former Lt. Virgil Lessane said he received a voice mail of a recorded conversation between two people who referred to him, and one person used a racial slur. Lessane said he believes Foard and another trooper, Capt. Phillip Jones, were the speakers.

Lessane is black and the other two officers are white. Jones retired after the investigation. Foard will be reinstated with full pay and benefits retroactive to 2006.

Personal story of homelessness is coming to the small screen

FROM CROWN FEATURES SYNDICATE

When Chandra Wilson of "Grey's Anatomy" counts her blessings, a familiar old saying sometimes pops into her head: "There but for the grace of God go I."

It's a thought, Wilson says, that keeps her humble, makes her grateful, prevents her from judging others who are less fortunate.

"I think we all know, especially in today's economy," she says, "we're about two paychecks or one disaster or one illness away from financial ruin."

Wilson poignantly illustrates how fragile one's life can be in "Accidental Friendship," a Hallmark Channel movie premiering at 9 p.m., on Saturday, Nov. 15.

She plays Yvonne, a homeless woman who gets a helping hand and a chance to start anew from a compassionate police officer (played by Kathleen Munroe).

It's a film, based on a true story, that Wilson believes could have a profound effect on viewers. For some, she says, it might awaken a spirit of volunteerism; others might be inspired to take stock of their own lives.

But Wilson's greatest hope is that the film prompts viewers to re-examine their preconceived ideas and misconceptions about the homeless.

"We could be much more



Chandra Wilson in "Accidental Friendship."

Crown Features Photo

empathic as a society," she says. "The first thing we need to remember is, 'Look, this could happen to any of us.'"

It's "too easy" a diagnosis, Wilson insists, to blame the

plight of the homeless solely on laziness, addiction or mental illness.

"Many of these folks still have jobs," she says. "They just can't keep everything

above water."

Wilson met one such family while preparing for her role.

"The father still had a job, but they couldn't afford the rent any more," she says. "They needed to let that house go while he got a couple of paychecks under his belt. Then they could move into an apartment. Some of these things are really planned out."

It's hardly the ideal financial recovery plan, to be sure. But it's unfair to that family, Wilson says, for anyone to cast judgment.

Wilson didn't get the opportunity before filming to meet or to spend time with the woman whose journey back from life on the street is dramatized. But she did get to meet Tami Baumann, the Los Angeles police officer who reached out to Yvonne.

"Tami spent some time on the set with us and that was really cool," Wilson says.

In many ways, "Accidental Friendship" is as much Baumann's story as it is Yvonne's. Everyone on the set – particularly Munroe, who joined her real-life counterpart on a police ride-along one evening – was inspired by Baumann.

"She's a really passionate individual," Wilson says. "Her heart is out there."

It's worth noting, though, that the actress didn't need to look far for insight before

See Film on A13

Study: Black coach numbers lowest in 15 years

BY MARK WANGRIN THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ORLANDO, Fla. – Days after the election of the country's first black president, a study was released that shows the number of African-American coaches in major college football is the lowest in 15 years.

With the recent dismissals of Ty Willingham at Washington and Ron Prince at Kansas State, the number of black head coaches in the 119-school NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision was reduced to four.

In 1997, there were eight black head coaches, the most in history. In 1993, there were only three.

Fifty-five percent of all student athletes are minorities.

The report by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida polled every major college on the ethnicity of its coaches, athletic directors, presidents, faculty, student athletes and NCAA faculty representatives.

"While the percentages are slightly better, the general picture is still one of white men running college sport," said Richard Lapchick, the report's co-author. "Overall, the numbers simply do not reflect the diversity of our student-athletes. Moreover, they do not reflect the diversity of our nation where we have elected an African-American as President for the first time."

The report also looked at university leadership, including presidents and athletic directors. Ninety-one percent are white. Minority representation in all positions increased less than 1 percent last year.

Charlotte Westerhaus, NCAA vice president for diversity and inclusion, said she was disappointed in the figures, particularly considering the election.

"This moment on (Election Day) reflected the best of our country," Westerhaus said. "Our country showed the will and the way. We have to do the same."

Lapchick has asked the NCAA to adopt a rule to mandate that minorities be interviewed for head coaching jobs. Calling it the "Eddie Robinson Rule," in reference to the record-setting Grambling coach, Lapchick said it would be a college version of the NFL's Rooney Rule. The NFL sanctions teams that do not interview a minority candidate.

Westerhaus said the Rooney Rule is in practice, if not rule. She added the NCAA cannot legally impose such penalties.

"The vast majority of insti-



Prince

tutions interviewed coaches of color," she said. "It think it's 90 percent. We're doing some of the things the Rooney Rule calls for. What's disappointing is the hiring doesn't reflect that."

Last season, 30 percent of the candidates interviewed for 22 openings were minorities. Two were hired.

Since 1996, 12 black

coaches have been hired for 199 jobs. The only black head coaches currently set to finish the season are Miami's Randy Shannon, Mississippi State's Sylvester Croom, Buffalo's Turner Gill and Houston's Kevin Sumlin. Florida International is coached by Mario Cristobal, a Hispanic, and Navy coach Ken

See Coaches on A13



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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, N.C. 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