

# Gov. Perdue endorses the president's 'Serve' campaign

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

North Carolina has signed on to United We Serve, a national campaign spearheaded by President Obama to engage more Americans in serving their communities this summer.

Gov. Bev Perdue announced her wholehearted support for the effort this week. She says that the Governor's Office and the state's departments and agencies will participate.

"These 11 weeks are a time for North Carolinians to take the lead in organizing service projects and forging partnerships with local organizations to get their communities back on track," Perdue said. "Whether you are working in a soup kitchen, reading to a child or

helping out a friend in need, everyone's small efforts can create some big results."

The campaign kicked off on June 22 and runs through Sept. 11, which will be marked for the first time as a national day of service and remembrance. The initiative focuses on four key areas: education, health, community renewal, and energy and the environment. It is being led by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal

agency that improves lives and strengthens communities through volunteering and service.

The governor will focus on mentoring during the summer of service campaign. Cabinet secretaries will volunteer with different nonprofits and advocacy groups throughout the summer as well. The governor also encourages state employees to use their allotted 24 community service hours in support of the initiative and to help get North Carolina back on track.

The Obama administration created [www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov), a Web site that allows visitors to type in their zip code to find local volunteer opportunities and recruit volunteers by posting their organization's projects.



Perdue



Brown



Miller



Quick

## Brown, friends to host personal growth seminar

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Radio personality Busta Brown will host an interactive forum on Saturday, June 27 at the 14th Street Recreation Center from 3-5 p.m.

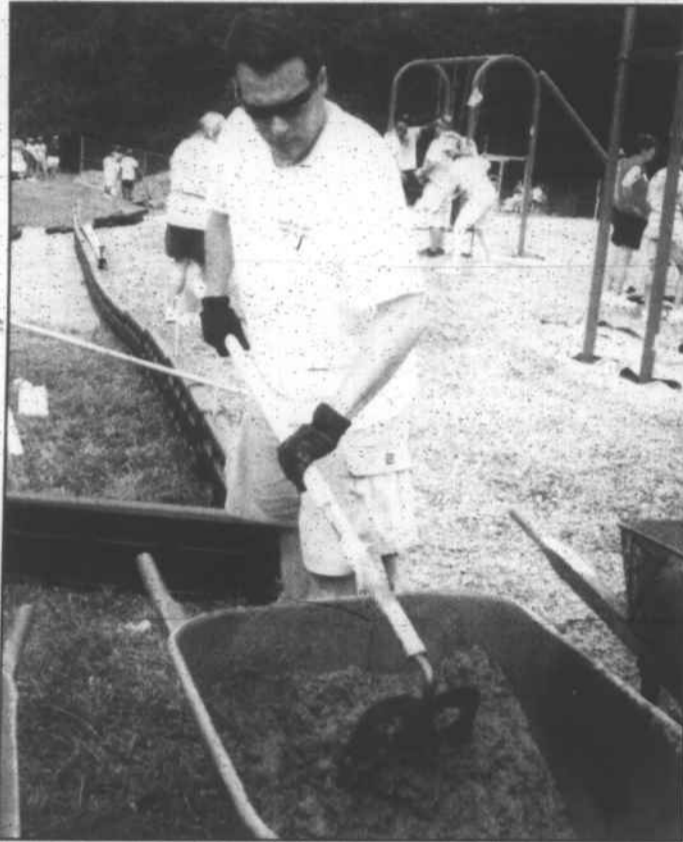
His "Building Your Life With Busta Brown" series has already held an event in High Point; another is slated to take place in Burlington in July. The events are designed, Brown says, to help improve lives - personally, professionally, spiritually, physically and financially.

"In 2009, I am determined to maximize my life and all that God has blessed me to know and do," Brown said of his motivation to start the series. "I am

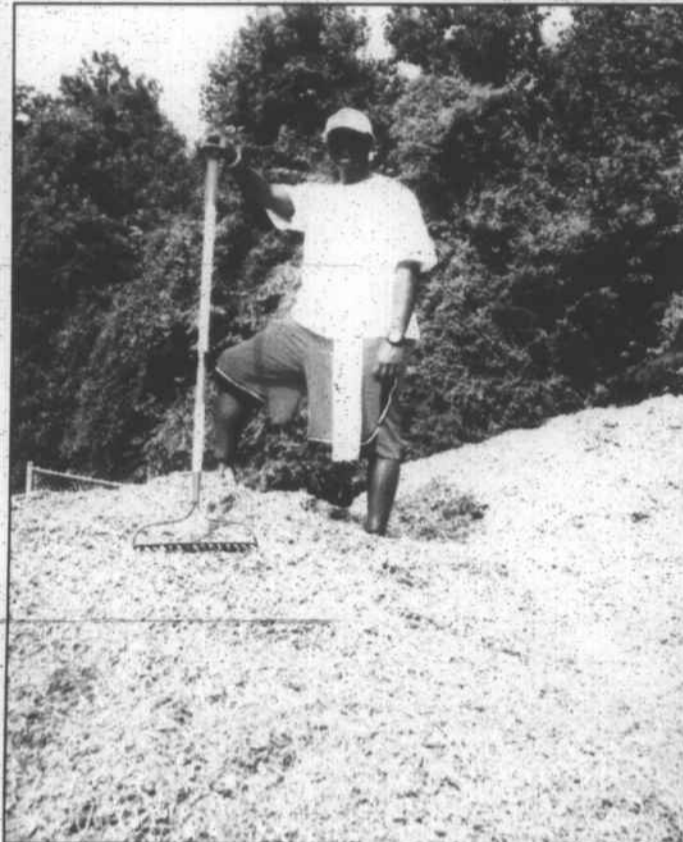
working to improve my life, and I want you to grow and learn right along with me."

A panel of experts knowledgeable in things such as finance and spirituality will join Brown for Saturday's event. They include local author Mercedes L. Miller, businessman Algenon Cash, and Amos Quick, a radio-personality and vice-chairman of the Guilford County Board of Education.

"I am confident that the top-notch group I have assembled will profoundly impact your life," said Brown. "They have made a major difference in my life."



YMCA of Northwest N.C. CEO Curt Hazelbaker mixes cement on Saturday morning.



Rashad Little, a WSSU senior and Winston Lake Y employee, stands atop a hill of mulch.



Scott Keefe, right, and Tommy Healy work in the playground's garden area.

## Playground

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One of the unique aspects of KaBOOM is that the agency requires the communities where they award grants to get involved by volunteering to build the play areas under the watchful supervision of trained professionals. Teams of volunteers have constructed more than 1,600 KaBOOM playgrounds, skateparks, sports fields and ice rinks across the nation.

"We really want people to understand the importance of play for kids," said Cassie Haslett, the KaBOOM project manager for the Winston Lake build, which was the agency's first in the city. "Play is not only important physically, but it really helps a child develop in so many other ways."

The call for volunteers was answered by loyal Winston Lake Y members, fraternal organizations like Omega Psi Phi and even members of The Firm, an area motorcycle club. Employees of BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina perhaps showed up in the largest numbers. The company has a large local operation in Madison Park on University Parkway, but some BlueCross volunteers drove in from Chapel Hill.



Winston Lake Y ED Shawan Gabriel in action.

where the company is headquartered. BlueCross BlueShield was the main funding partner for the Y playground build.

Micha James, a Winston-Salem BlueCross employee, was already drenched in sweat at 9:30 a.m. As she helped to paint a shelter adjacent to the playground site, James admitted that the heat was an unwelcome guest. But when her sweating became intense, she would simply remind herself of the reason she volunteered in the

first place.

"It's all for the kids," she said with smile. "And I believe to whom much is given, much is required."

Ian Gordon, senior vice president of operations at BlueCross, was sweating right alongside the other volunteers.

His company has put itself at the forefront of helping to make its employees, and North Carolinians in general, healthier. Gordon said the playground will mean so much more than fun and games for the kids that will soon be using it. He hopes it will be one of the first steps that kids will take in a lifetime of physical activity.

"This is important because so many kids play at home in front of a TV set," said Gordon, who pointed out that the covered shelter and even a garden are in close proximity to the playground so that parents will have things to occupy their time as their little ones play.

"The only way to do this (get kids active) is by getting the whole family involved," he believes.

Winston-Salem Fire Department Firefighter Gerrod Hardy could very well be strolling through that garden soon. But on Saturday, his full attention was focused on constructing wooden platforms for the

adult area of the playground.

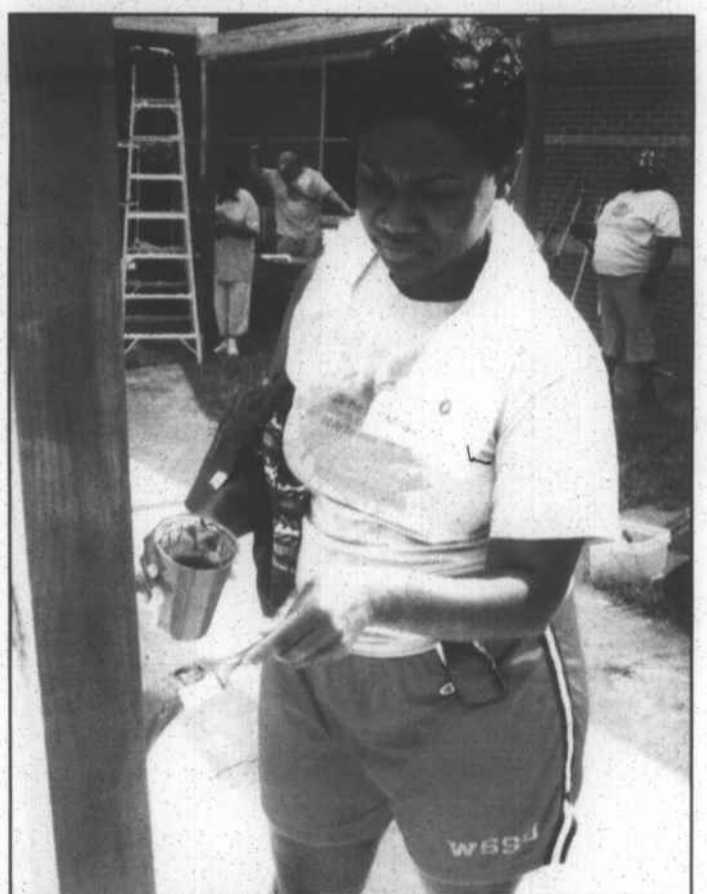
"My kids will be using this playground, so that makes it real special," he said.

Gabriel says that he doesn't want the playground - which had some design input from local kids - to be considered the Y's play area. He wants everyone - members and non-members - to take pride and ownership in the new addition.

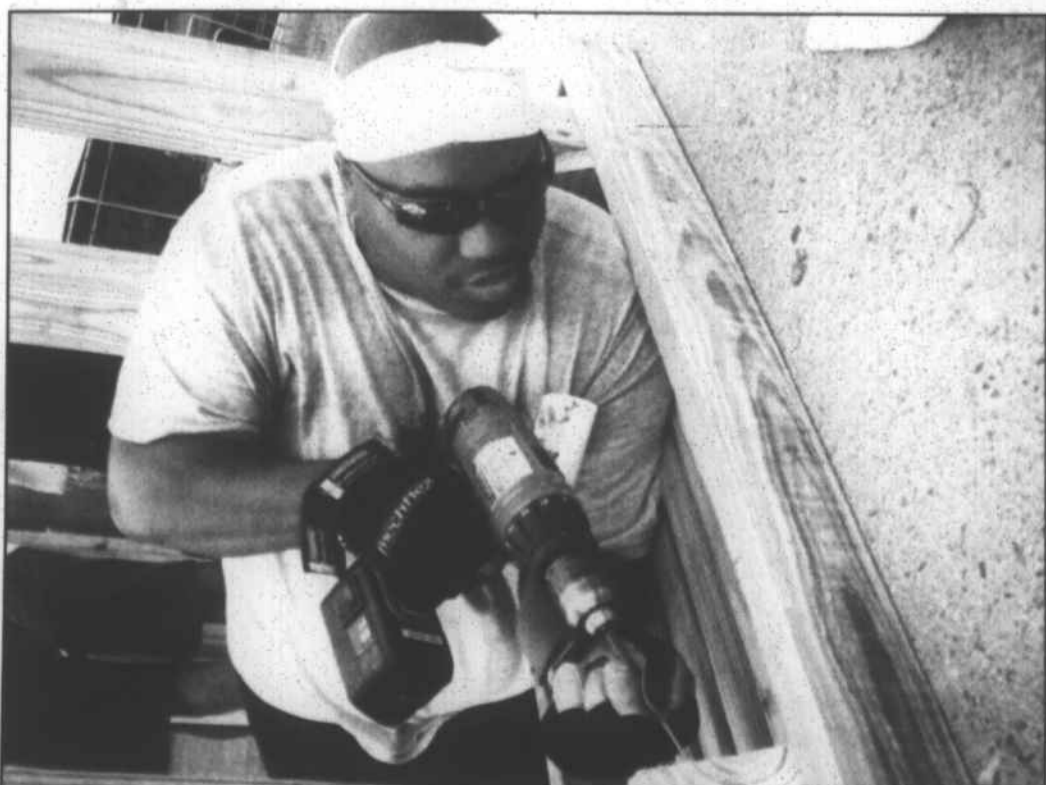
"This isn't just for the Y," he said. "It is truly for the community."

By mid-afternoon on Saturday, a colorful playground had taken shape. As of press time, though, it was not quite ready for business. Cement still needed to dry and a few other tweaks were still required. Gordon is among those who can't wait for youngsters to let loose on the playground.

"That is when we will really get our reward: when we drive by and see kids playing here," he said.



Micha James works up a sweat.



Gerrod Hardy assembles a piece for the playground area.

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