



Career Fair attracts students at Wake

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Families engage in building competition

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Islamic academy may open this fall

BY LAYLA GARMIS
THE CHRONICLE

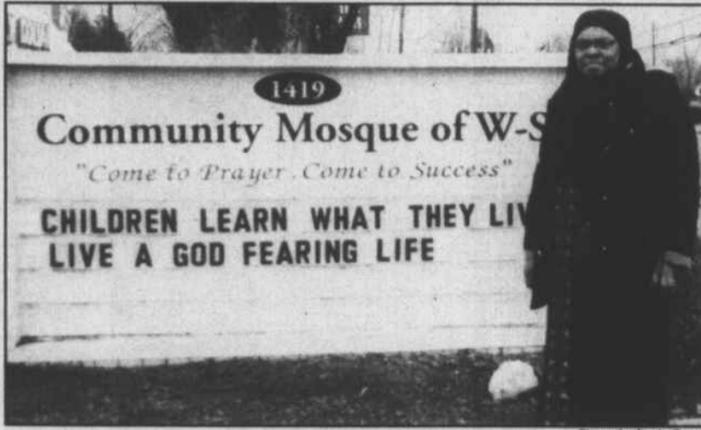
The Community Mosque of Winston-Salem is hoping to soon close on a piece of property directly behind its Waughtown Street building, ending a long search for a proper location for its proposed Islamic school.



Chaudhary

The mosque has hosted weekend educational programs for Muslim children for more than 30 years under the auspices of the Community Mosque Academy. If all goes as planned, the property on Bretton Street will become a full-time learning institution known as Community Mosque Academy Inc. Mosque members and supporters are providing the financial backing for the project, organizers say. The school could accept its first students in August.

"A Muslim school fills a very



Safiya Griggs stands outside the Community Mosque.

Photos by Layla Garmis

important gap," concluded Imam Khalid Griggs, the longtime leader of Community Mosque. "...We think this will give them a foundation in their faith that they will draw from for the rest of their lives."

Safiya Griggs, the Imam's wife, will serve as the Academy's first principal. It will require more schooling for Mrs. Griggs, who retired from the City of Winston-Salem in 2009,

but she says it will be well worth the effort to see the children of her community in a learning environment that supports and affirms their culture and beliefs.

"Parents want their children, in addition to public school, to learn their faith," she said. "Islam is not just a religion. It's a way of life."

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The crowd enjoys last year's Fiesta!

Hispanic League Photos

Hispanic League turns 20

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

The Hispanic League is celebrating a milestone anniversary.

Twenty years ago, the organization began when a group of local people came together to hold a small street festival called Fiesta!

Like Fiesta! — which now draws thousands of attendees each summer — the Hispanic League has grown in size and scope since 1992.

About 1,300 active members and volunteers help the organization carry out its mission — improving the lives of Hispanics and Latinos while promoting multicultural understanding. Along the way, the League has also been able to educate the broader community and break down cultural barriers.

"There were two misconceptions: one was that everyone moved here from Mexico, and the other one was if we wait long enough they'll go away," Executive Director Mari Jo Turner said, recalling some of the community's reactions to the burgeoning local Hispanic population.

Turner said Fiesta! — which showcases the dozens of nations in the Spanish-speaking world — was envisioned to help break-down some of those stereotypes.

Cristina Roche and her husband, Herve, attended the first planning meeting for Fiesta! She was charged with finding entertainers to perform at the event — a responsibility she held for many years.

"Somebody had the idea of let's do a festival and share our culture and share our music and share our food with the local community," said the Buenos Aires, Argentina native.

One small stage was all that was needed for the first Fiesta!, which was held on Trade Street. Today, Fiesta! acts perform on several sound stages scattered on and around Fourth Street in the heart of downtown Winston-Salem.

The League began its annual Spanish Nite fundraising gala soon after the first Fiesta! Proceeds from the event allowed the organization to provide scholarships to bright, college-bound Hispanic high school students.

"I had really been the one to shape the ESL program at Reynolds (High School) ... I had all the ESL students and I found a lot of them had the grades to go to college but not the money," said Dr. Joy McLaughlin, who helped to start the scholarship program.

McLaughlin said that one major problem was that non-



Maria Aristizabal speaks at a recent Spanish Nite.

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Photos by Layla Garmis

Virginia Cooper (left) poses with Rachel Jackson in the garden at Lloyds Presbyterian.

Below: Mary Jac Brennan oversees the gardening program.

Unions of the Garden Variety

Mentoring program aims to spread county's green revolution

BY LAYLA GARMIS
THE CHRONICLE

The Forsyth Cooperative Extension is looking for local residents with green thumbs to help ensure the success of the area's thriving community garden population.

With the help of a grant from the Winston-Salem Foundation, the Cooperative Extension is offering free training courses for community members who wish to take their leadership skills and their gardening expertise to

the next level, through the Community Garden Mentoring Program. Mentors are required to attend monthly programs at the Extension offices and meet at least biweekly with garden leaders. The training program, which includes 18 hours of mentor training and classroom instruction, is designed to broaden the Extension's reach in Forsyth County, which is home to an estimated 100 community gardens, said Mary Jac Brennan, Extension Agent for Community Gardens.



"These are people who know about gardening and then they get trained in community organizing. They are matched up with gardens that need some help with the organization part of it," Brennan explained. "...It's a really good way for us to stay in touch with gardens and for gardens to have a direct pipeline to us."

The mentoring program was launched in 2011 to serve the ever-growing demand of a burgeoning community garden popula-

See Gardens on A7

Author enters uncharted territory

Southern black gay men's stories brought to life

BY LAYLA GARMIS
THE CHRONICLE



Coleman

Hickory native Dr. E. Patrick Johnson will be exploring the complexities of race and sexuality onstage at Wake Forest University's Scales Fine Arts Center next week.

The UNC Chapel Hill alumnus will share the life experiences of black gay Southern men during a Feb. 5 performance of "Pouring Tea," a stage production based on his 2006 book, "Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the

See Johnson on A8



Photo courtesy of Dr. Johnson

E. Patrick Johnson performs on stage in "Pouring Tea."

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