



### Runner preparing for big competition

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### Cook students mark Earth Day

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# THE CHRONICLE

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## Schools reduce crime, suspensions

BY LAYLA GARMS  
THE CHRONICLE

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools has reduced the number of dropouts, reportable acts of crime and violence, short- and long-term suspensions and expulsions, according to a recent N.C. Department of Public Instruction report.

Reported crimes decreased by nearly 50 percent from the 2010-11 to the 2012-13 school year. Suspensions — both long- and short-term — and expulsions also declined significantly during that time period, while graduation rates experienced an uptick to 82.1 percent, according to the report.



Emory

"The decrease is the result of the efforts of our students, their families, and our teachers and staff as we work to increase the graduation rate to 90 percent by 2018," Superintendent Beverly Emory said. "We want every student to graduate, and this shows that our work is paying off."



Johnson-Green

The numbers, however, do not tell the whole story. Reports from across the nation have revealed a pattern of students of color — boys in particular — being disciplined more harshly than white students, contributing to a phenomenon known as the School to Prison Pipeline, which the American Civil Liberties Union describes as "disturbing national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems."

Local statistics also show disparities. All of those in the county who received long term suspensions (those that last through the end of the school year) at the high school level in 2012-13 were students of color. R.J. Reynolds suspended one student — a male of multiracial descent — while Carver, the only other high school where the punishment was dolled out that year, suspended five African Americans, one multiracial female and two Native or Pacific Islander students. Kernersville, Paisley IB, Philo-Hill and Wiley middle schools suspended one student each in 2012-13. Kernersville suspended a white female, Paisley suspended an African American female, Philo-Hill suspended a multiracial male and Wiley suspended a white male. Old Town Elementary, the only elementary school that enacted the punishment, suspended two African American students.

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools officials readily admit that the district has experienced racial disparities in long term suspensions and expulsions.

"It is a big concern," said Carol Montague-Davis, assistant superintendent of Middle and High School Administration. "...We need to educate (all students) and we need to know that if they're not in school, they can't learn, but at the same time, we can't have kids in place that are

See Schools on A7

## Stadium still the city's

### Snail's pace for WSSU purchase of Bowman Gray

BY LAYLA GARMS  
THE CHRONICLE

Nearly a year after City Council signed off on the sale of Bowman Gray Stadium to Winston-Salem State University, the transaction remains in limbo.

Council members approved a resolution in May 2013 recommending that the city sell the stadium to Winston-Salem State. City Manager Lee Garrity said, but the sale can't take place until the N.C. Department of Administration State Property Office makes an offer on WSSU's behalf.

The city's \$7.1 million asking price is what is required to recover the debt for the construction of the WSSU football field house and improvements the city has made to the facility over the past 10-15 years,



Garrity said. Both the city and the university are in agreement about the mutual benefits of the sale of the property, which has been appraised at roughly \$9 million, he added.

"We're ready to sell it," the city manager stated. "...We're waiting for an offer."

That offer has yet to surface.

Although some have questioned why the city and university haven't found some end roads to circumvent the red tape, Garrity said any transaction with the state-owned institution

See WSSU on A8

## Bowing In Gracefully



Photo by Lauren Cowart Photography

Grace members (from left) Gene Hoskins, Janae Brown of Charlotte, Ajay Simmons of Raleigh, Alisha Henderson of Roxboro and Winston-Salem's own Melvin Aikens Jr.

## Local singer's group makes gospel debut

BY LAYLA GARMS  
THE CHRONICLE

Melvin Aikens Jr. has been a singer/songwriter all his life, yet it's only been recently that the 23-year-old has found the courage to step out on faith and truly share his gift with the world.

"I'm just now started to realize that it is a gift, and it is what God has called me to do," he said of his musical ability. "It is something I have to do; the last thing I want to do is lose it."

Aikens and four of his closest friends came together last year to create Grace, a Raleigh-based gospel group. Aiken penned the quintet's first single, "Drifting," which was released last month. In March, the group made its stage debut, delivering what Pastor

Ronald Godbee describes as a rousing performance at The River, a Durham church Godbee leads.

Grace took the crowd of about 500 by storm, Godbee said.

"To see the eclectic array of people that were gathered in that place was truly beautiful," declared Godbee, who serves as the group's spiritual advisor. "The worship was pure, the anointing was evident and the people were tremendously blessed."

Winston-Salem native Aikens is a member of Union Baptist Church. He

has always been fiercely protective of his work, seeing his lyrics as a private form of worship and too intimate to share. Witnessing the audience's reaction to his words was a deeply moving experience, the UNC Chapel Hill alumnus said.

"I could hear people responding and reacting to the words of our songs. I was moved to the point where it was like an out of body experience, like, 'I can't believe this is happening to me,'" he related. "Literally, I broke down. It was just so overwhelming to hear people really being blessed by the words God had given to me."

The group is offering free downloads of "Drifting" online at bandcamp.com through Saturday, May 3.

See Aikens on A2

## Committee to consider public's input in search for new chancellor

BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE



Pender

The search is on for the next Winston-Salem State University chancellor, and the public is being invited to add its two cents.

The Chancellor's Search Committee is hosting a series of public forums as part of its effort to find someone to replace Dr. Donald Reaves, who announced in March that he will retire Dec. 31 after leading the school for seven years.

This evening (Thursday, May 1) at 7 p.m. in room 100 of the school's Donald Julian Reaves Student Activities Center, the public and alumni are invited to give committee their input. Yesterday, two similar meetings were held



WSSU Photo by Garrett Garms

Debra Miller listens as Chancellor Donald Reaves speaks last year at the grand opening of a center named in his honor.

See Chancellor on A8

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