

Dunbar Center opens doors in East Spencer

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

A landmark in Rowan County's black community has a new lease on life.

The Paul Laurence Dunbar Center officially opens Sunday with a neighborhood gala in East Spencer, months after the Rowan-Salisbury Board of Education moved former North Rowan Middle School to

Spencer. The ceremony starts at 3 p.m. at the center, at 820 S. Long St.

The facility, a source of pride among African Americans when it was Dunbar High School, may ultimately serve as a one-stop home to human services programs. Satellite offices of the Rowan Health Department and Department of Social Services are housed there, as is an after-school

tutoring and activity program for students. Also in the works are a small business incubator and African American cultural center.

The Rowan school board, which owns the building, renamed the facility and allowed organizers to attract services and agencies to Dunbar. School officials turned part of the old school into the family resource cen-

ter; North Rowan High School's child care class is also housed there, as is Livingstone College's Academy for Academic and Cultural Enrichment. The school system is moving other programs - including North Rowan High's food production class - to Dunbar. All programs at the center pay for its maintenance.

The center, which has its

own board of directors, won a \$100,000 grant from the state's Family Preservation Grant last year, and plans are underway to launch a fund raiser to keep Dunbar open when the grants are tapped out.

For more information on the Dunbar Center, call 647-0054, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays.

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Farrakhan named year's "most influential."

By William Reed
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan had the most impact on African Americans



Farrakhan

in 1995, according to a poll done by the National Newspaper Publishers Association. With the success of the Million Man March last October, Farrakhan has emerged as the most important leader of the masses of African-American people. Although he has had a considerable national following since the mid-1980s - Farrakhan was voted the "Most Influential Black Leader" in the 1994 Black Press of America True Voice Poll - it became impossible to ignore him after his "Men Only Meetings" campaigns in 1994 and 1995 and the groundswell of support and endorsements among black groups and individuals he

generated before, and after, the Million Man March. In his 40th year of public ministering, some believe the 62-year-old Jesus-quoting Muslim has eclipsed even the stature of Martin Luther King at his apex.

Farrakhan was born Louis Eugene Walcott in the Bronx, New York in 1933. He was the youngest of two sons of Mae Clark, a deeply religious and strong willed woman who immigrated to America from Barbados in the early 1920s. His father, a schoolteacher and Baptist preacher, left the family shortly after Farrakhan's birth, and his mother raised the family through employment as a domestic worker. Now an immaculate dresser, Farrakhan during his childhood, is reported to have worn clothes his mother made for he and his brother Alvin.

Farrakhan grew up in the Roxbury section of Boston. He graduated from Boston English High School, where he was a champion sprinter, played the violin and performed drama. As a young man, he was also a choirboy in the St. Cyprian Episcopal

Church. Farrakhan earned a track scholarship from Winston-Salem Teachers College, spending two years there. He later used his Caribbean musical background to earn a living in his twenties as a guitar-playing calypso and country singer.

He was recruited into the Nation of Islam by Malcolm X in 1955. Farrakhan became Malcolm X's assistant in Boston and later minister at that Mosque when Malcolm moved to Harlem. During that period, he first changed his name to Louis X, and then to Louis Abdul Farrakhan. He eventually followed Malcolm X to the Harlem Mosque and replaced him there as its minister, as well, after Malcolm left the Nation of Islam in 1964. From his platform in the Harlem Mosque, Farrakhan started to perform as chief spokesman of Nation of Islam leader, Elijah Muhammad. Under the tutelage of Muhammad, Malcolm X grew to national prominence, as would three others in later years: Silius Muhammad, Yahweh Ben Yahweh and Farrakhan.

Like his direct tutor, Elijah

Muhammad, Farrakhan is devoted to the teachings of Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican black nationalist who galvanized the American black community in the early 1920s. Fundamental tenants of Muhammad and Farrakhan come from Garvey and his United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which taught blacks should be proud of their color and heritage while pursuing economic self-sufficiency and self-help. Farrakhan's West Indian background, and the success of most Caribbean-born Americans during his younger days, as well as the present, all point to Garvey's teachings.

Farrakhan now lives in Chicago's Hyde Park section. He and his wife, Khadijah, have nine children and two scores of grandchildren. Nation of Islam business interests include Clean 'n' Fresh grooming products, the newly opened Salaam Restaurant complex in Chicago, security firms that guard government-owned public housing projects nationwide as well as private sector firms such as Federal

Express. The Nation of Islam is currently building a printing plant for the Final Call and other publications.

Blue: Republican cuts would hurt

Continued from page 1A

want to cut services to the elderly, Medicare and Medicaid. They want to cut services to the poor population, programs that give opportunity to young children.

Blue commended President Clinton for resisting the Republican pressure in the present balanced budget negotiations.

"America is about giving opportunity to those who may not be basically well off in life," Blue said. "If we start cutting back on medical care, that's going to put an inordinate burden on individuals...first senior citizens, ultimately their families. People are living longer. They use Social Security longer. Congress is counting Social Security into their budget calculations."

Blue said he believes the N.C. House will return to a Democratic majority after the November election.

"I think people realize the smokescreens have been going away," Blue said. "People are realizing the N.C. legislature under Democratic leadership had done a tremendous job on education."

"The Republican administration has pretty much given up on public education and they want to abandon it. They want a system of vouchers and to take everybody out of

public schools who can match the voucher.

"People realize the whole thing with early intervention was done by a Democratic legislature and Republicans tried to destroy it. Those kinds of issues will bring people back to the fold. The policies of the Democratic legislature looked down the road at where we could be and tried to create opportunity."

Blue, who was a sophomore at N.C. Central University in Durham when King was killed in 1968, said slain civil rights leader would be in the thick of today's policy debates if he were alive.

King had favored such issues as affirmative action, a fair criminal justice system, social programs to aid the poor and elderly and jobs creation, Blue said.

"As I reflect on Martin and how he is universally embraced, it reminds me...the fact that he is so lovingly remembered today is a sure sign that he is forgotten," Blue said. "Those who were coming of age in '60s remember that people hated him back then, blacks and whites. Blacks felt he was moving too slow or that he was grabbing the power of local black leaders. It frightened people who thought about the movement."

"What you have to realize is that the goals of justice we identify with Martin Luther

King are still goals we have to strive toward. They are not things we have achieved. The world does not change that much in one generation.

Congress is not taking steps to really address some of those kinds of issues, Blue said.

"Dr. King would be talking about the 'glass ceiling' beyond which very few African Americans move in corporate America...about real opportunity in employment. Some statistics show no tremendous change in the ability of blacks to earn a living vis a vis

whites, than it was in the 1960s," he said.

"Dr. King would be talking about educational attainment...the number of high school dropouts is very discouraging and for those who go to college, what opportunities are available?"

"Dr. King would be talking about responsibility, not just rights. Dr. King would be a moral force for responsibility on part of all Americans, blacks and whites."

Blue said King's admonition to young blacks to be best at whatever they do "has mean-

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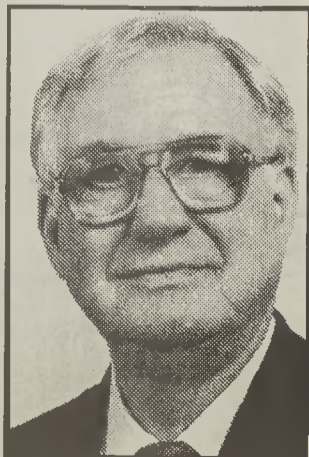
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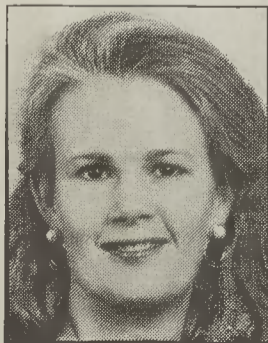
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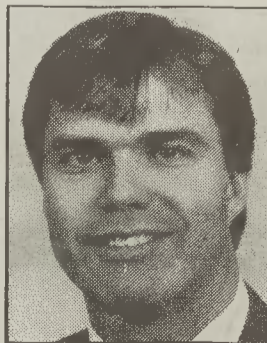
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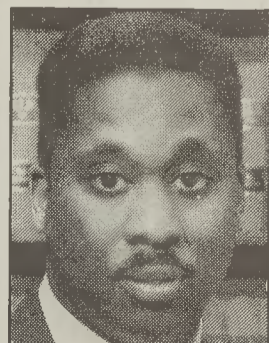
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Correction

An article in the Dec. 28 Post omitted the West Charlotte High School National Alumni Association's efforts to convert a library into a museum. The association, headed by president Geraldine Powe of Charlotte, is lobbying the Public Library of Charlotte-Mecklenburg to convert the LaSalle Street branch into a museum of African American history.