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Mfume cuts large staff at NAACP

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BALTIMORE — Two weeks into his new job as head of the NAACP, Kweisi Mfume has fired about 15 staff members, including the civil rights group's membership director.



Mfume

Employees were notified Friday through a letter distributed at the organization's Baltimore headquarters that read in part, "regret-

tably, the position you now occupy will be eliminated."

The letter gave the staff members 30 days to leave, but fired employees told The (Baltimore) Sun that they were advised to leave immediately and not return to work.

Sandra Almond, chairwoman of Local 2202-N of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and one of those fired, said the union would protest not being notified of the dismissals. She said six of those fired were union members.

"I knew there would be reorganization, but I felt as a union representative I would be a part of it," said Almond, a 15-year NAACP veteran who headed the membership processing unit. "Just to be told to pack up your things and take your personal belongings and not come back, I find it very insulting."

Also fired were Isazetta Spikes, membership director; Janice Washington, a 27-year veteran who was assistant director of branches and field services; and Linda Hursey, public relations director.

Staff reductions appeared inevitable since NAACP Treasurer Francisco L. Borges reported last month that the organization planned to reduce its \$3.2 million debt to about \$800,000 this year. "The only way we can do that is by making pretty significant cuts," he said.

The cuts reduced the national staff of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People by about one-third.

YMCA to run Greenville?

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The city of Charlotte's is discussing a plan to turn the Greenville Center over to the YMCA, but the idea has been put on hold after neighborhood protests.

The city wants to privatize more of its operations, including some of its recreation centers. The issue will be discussed at a March 25 meeting of the City Council's City Within A City committee.

Committee chair Ella Scarborough said the city is reviewing whether a private agency, such as the YMCA, can run the Greenville, Belmont or Amay James neighborhood centers better than the city.

"It is not a question of ownership, just management," Scarborough said. "This is part of the big picture of what is it we are doing or not doing efficiently. And can they run it or do it at a cheaper price."

The three centers remain

from the city's turn over of its recreation program to Mecklenburg County. The discussions come as the YMCA is looking at expanding its own community development efforts in the inner city.

The YMCA wants to expand programming in the area between Graham Street and Freedom Drive, south of I-85, similar to programs run out of the Johnson YMCA on Davidson Street. But the

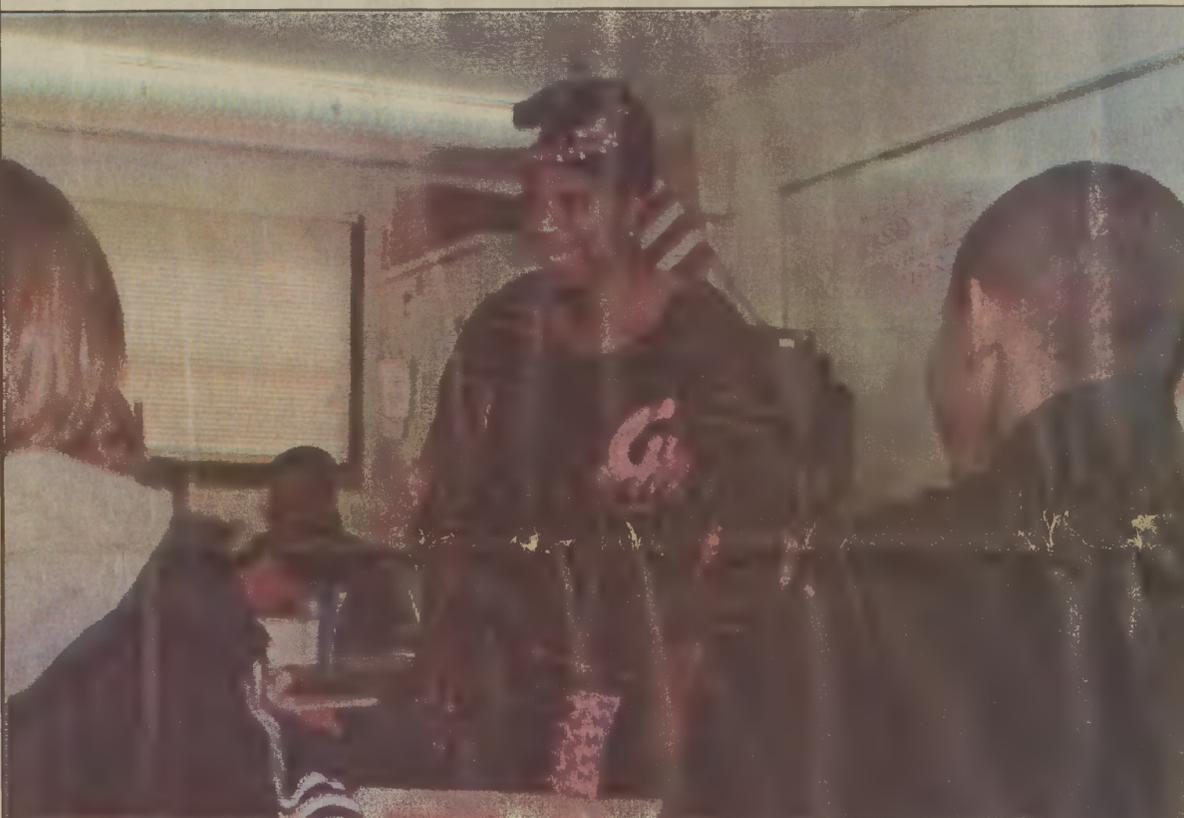
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PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Quinton Littlejohn, 7, outside Greenville Center, one of three owned by city, but YMCA may manage.

ADDING LIGHT TO LIFE



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Ann Burris hasn't let blindness stop her from helping others. She is a volunteer in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' peer mediation program (here at Garinger High School) as well as an advocate for the visually-impaired.

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Blindness doesn't stop Charlotte woman from reaching out

Ann Burris loves to joke, argue about UNC-Chapel Hill basketball and talk to kids.

What she can't stand is not reaching back to help other people because of self-imposed limitations or life's bad breaks. Like her blindness.

"A pity party can only last but for so long. There are always people in worse shape than you are. You have to pick yourself up, dust yourself off and keep going."

Burris, 28, has been going

despite battling varying degrees of blindness since birth. She spends her days as a peer mediation counselor with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and motivational speaker with Programs for Accessible Living. Her busy schedule leaves little time for feeling sorry.

"I see it as a challenge for me," she said. "That's an enlightenment to other people; not just to sighted people, but to blind people."

"She's spontaneous," says Jacque DeWalt, a Garinger freshman who attended meditation sessions with her. "I was amazed. You would never know (she is blind) just by looking at her or watching her reaction to everyday life. She is very inspirational."

Burris, who leads peer mediation seminars at Garinger High School, found challenges early. Her mother, Ozell Kennedy, had German measles during the first

trimester of her pregnancy with Burris, causing the baby to be born with cataracts. Surgery at age 2 left her with 20/200 vision, which is legally blind. She developed glaucoma at 11, but battled to graduate from Harding High in 1986. The mother of three, Burris has been married since 1989 to Charles Burris, a mechanic at Lance.

After the trials of trying to fit in a world for the sighted, Burris is an expert on surviving the taunts of ignorant strangers and cruel classmates. She also helps today's students understand what it's

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Fraternity suspended by district office before UNCC

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Omega Psi Phi fraternity chapter kicked off the UNC Charlotte campus this week had been suspended by the parent organization a month earlier.

UNCC officials say they took action after a student complained of being beaten and humiliated, or "hazed," by members of the Omega's Epsilon Zeta chapter on the campus. The school reportedly has also expelled the 11 chapter members after a hearing last week, but assistant dean Coleen Blough said student privacy rights prevented her from confirming the reports.

The Epsilon Zeta chapter have until March 15 to appeal the review board's action to the vice chancellor, said Blough.

Raleigh-based John Scott, Omega Psi Phi's Sixth District representative, said his office investigated allegations of severe hazing by the UNCC chapter and ordered the suspension. The district office covers the Carolinas, approximately 100 chapters and 2,500 members.

"Prior to the university action, we had placed the chapter under suspension for three years...as a result of the same information," Scott said Wednesday.

"We in fact are still looking into the situation. We have conducted an investigation and an investigation is going on. There are serious charges pending against young men alleged to have been involved."

For that reason, Scott was reluctant to reveal details of the investigations.

"We abolished pledging as a prerequisite to membership in 1985," he said. "We have an

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Program helps students SCALE reading heights

By Josephine George
THE CHARLOTTE POST

It's 3 p.m. Monday, and Natasha Jones has just arrived at the Tarlton Hills Community Center.

As Jones steps into a room that seems no larger than her Johnson C. Smith University dormitory room, children bombard her with "I need help, I need help." It's time to start counseling.

Jones is part of the Americorps/Student Coalition For Action in Literacy Education program at Smith, which is designed to improve the literacy of children. UNC-Chapel Hill, one of four N.C. schools in the program along

with JCSU, Fayetteville State and N.C. Wesleyan universities, provides operational grants. In addition to Tarlton Hills, near the JCSU campus, SCALE volunteers also work at Mayfield Community Center, off Sugar Creek Road.

Smith's Americorps/SCALE program is headquartered at the school's Service Learning Center. Angela Jeter, the site manager and coordinator, said the center coordinates education activities on and off campus as well as linking JCSU with other communities. This is nothing new to Jeter, who has prior experience in this field as a Girl Scout administrator.

"I enjoy holding a two-hat



Natasha Jones, (l.) a Johnson C. Smith University junior tutor Dilworth Elementary second grader DeMario Wiggins, 8.

position. I've had experience with the Girls Scout linking seven counties together," she said.

Some students need more

than improved reading habits. There was a little boy in Tarlton Hills who was so shy, he never took his eyes off the

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