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# STRICTLY BUSINESS

Former Charlotte Hornets Honeybee Michelle Bagby (center) teaches dance and cheerleading skills at Bagby Studios Cheerdance.



PHOTO: WADE NASH

## Instructor shows off fancy footwork

By Paula Young  
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Dance landed Michelle Bagby a spot in the NBA. Now it's helped the former Charlotte Hornets Honeybee launch her own business. After three years of teaching dance in a small room at a local gym, Bagby, an original Honeybee, now owns her own

studio: Bagby Studios Cheerdance Inc. Her students are children from kindergarten through 12th grade and adults trying out for professional dance squads and cheerleading. Bagby's youngest students, known as the Carolina Fly Girls, dance at local sporting events, and often advance on to high school cheerleading teams. "I love teaching the kids,"

Bagby said. "Out of everything, this is the most rewarding thing I've done." Bagby is a one-woman team, handling the studio's advertising, marketing and recruiting, but plans to hire more instructors and add a tumbling class that could attract more boys into the studio. "Now that I have more space, I can do a lot more things," she

said. Bagby, 31, has been a dancer since seventh grade. She started by participating in competitions, then on to UNC Charlotte and the Hornets, where she danced for five years. After her stint with the Hornets, Bagby pursued other career opportunities. Through a coworker, she was asked to give private lessons to a

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## Building confidence in your website

By Amanda Danchi  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Are you contemplating building a Web site or enhancing your current one to sell products or services online? If so, you'll want to make sure that your site is secure. Essentially, this means having a system of controls in place to prevent the inappropriate or illegal access to information provided by those who visit your Web site and make purchases online. The North Carolina Association of CPAs offers the following advice on building a secure Web site that can also help build consumer confidence.

### Ensure encryption technology is in place

Encryption technology is one of the most important security features to implement when setting up your site. Encryption technology scrambles information from a readable form to a nonreadable form for security purposes.

When consumers consider using their credit card to make online purchases, they often look to see if the site operates with a secure server. Secure sites use SSL (Secure Sockets Layer), a type of encryption technology that protects credit card information before transmission. There are various hardware and software mechanisms that a business can use to ensure that their systems are secure.

### Locate a payment processor

If your Web site requires online payment, then you'll need a payment processor. This provider will set up a merchant account for you at the bank, install the proper software and fraud controls on your site, provide support, detailed reports and ensure that your profits are deposited quickly.

Finding a payment processor is fairly easy, but you need to do some research first. Here is some helpful advice to locate a reputable payment processor:

Shop around for the best rates. Expect to pay about 2 to 4 percent per transaction. Don't pay excessive set up fees (the going rate is about \$200-\$250). Be cautious about jumping into a lease deal. Suggest trying out the equipment first.

### Post refund and return policies

Many consumers shy away from credit card purchases online because they are unsure of the basic return and refund policies. Posting refund and return policies, shipping time, and pertinent business practices, as well as providing e-mail confirmations, demonstrates that a company stands behind its product. Merchants who disclose this information up front are more likely to win consumer trust.

### Disclose privacy policies

A person's name, address, phone number, e-mail address, Social Security number, and other personal information, is often needed when visiting or purchasing online. Consumers are generally hesitant about pro-

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SPECIAL TO THE POST

La-Van Hawkins alleges in a \$1.9 billion lawsuit that Burger King Corp. broke its promise to help open 225 restaurants.

# An unsavory tale

## Detroit entrepreneur sues Burger King Corporation

POST NEWS SERVICES

DETROIT — A Detroit business owner has filed a \$1.9 billion suit against the Burger King Corp., charging the company with breach of contract and violation of the Michigan Franchise Investment Law.

La-Van Hawkins accuses Burger King officials of luring him to their franchisee fold in 1996 by promising the opportunity to build 125 restaurants and buy another 100 within a five-year period and subsequently reneging on the agreement. Hawkins owns 27 Burger King restaurants in Detroit, Chicago, Atlanta, Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

"Burger King needed an experienced

franchisee who had effectively operated quick serve restaurants in their most under served market, the inner city," Hawkins said. "They recruited me because of my success with Checkers and promised me 225 Burger King restaurants in eight urban areas. They have since done everything they could to stop me from reaching that goal."

Shaw University graduate and trial attorney Willie Gary is representing Hawkins. Gary is most noted for his \$500,000 verdict in Jackson, Miss., against the Lowen Group, a large Canadian funeral home chain.

In 1991, Hawkins opened his first Checkers restaurant in Atlanta and by 1995 had interests in or operated 34 sites. Hawkins alleges Burger King duped him into joining the corporation to attract their larger franchisees to open restau-

rants in urban areas, a market seen as less profitable and undesirable.

"Burger King used me as proof that inner city stores can make money," Hawkins said. "Now that I have proven the viability of urban stores, they are trying to induce larger franchisees to penetrate the urban market in an effort to save the corporation money."

Hawkins says Burger King's breach of contract has cost him substantial lost revenue and investment, damaged his reputation and impaired his ability to do business.

Hawkins rose from a high school dropout and former gang member to a successful career in the fast food industry. In Detroit Hawkins built new restaurants in underserved areas and provided nearly \$1 million in scholarships to urban youth.

## Lawyer: Big tobacco hasn't changed much over years

By Catherine Wilson  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI — Big Tobacco has not truly changed its ways and should be punished financially for decades of misconduct, an attorney seeking punitive damages for sick smokers told a jury Monday. A tobacco attorney countered that the industry has changed a lot.

"They're on the same page they always were on," attorney Stanley Rosenblatt said in opening statements as jurors begin considering a possible multibillion-dollar punitive ver-

dict. "These defendants most assuredly have not truly changed."

The same jury already has ruled against the industry and awarded \$12.7 million in compensatory damages to three smokers representing approximately 300,000 to 500,000 sick Florida smokers. As the tobacco response got under way, lead tobacco attorney Dan Webb agreed the main issue is "have they gotten the message."

"What this case is really about is whether these tobacco companies have changed," he said. "There's an enormous disagreement."

He promised to present "significant and compelling evidence" about how the tobacco companies conduct their business today and changes in conduct in recent years.

"There are new people at the top. There's a new attitude," he said. "The companies are walking the extra mile to deal with different smoking and health issues."

The case is the nation's only statewide lawsuit seeking damages for hundreds of thousands of people with smoking-related injuries.

## Actors' Guild wars over Powell commercial spot

By Lynn Elber  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — The striking Screen Actors Guild was at war Monday with Colin Powell over the non-union production of a public service spot for the retired general's youth charity.

The public service announcement for America's Promise, The Alliance For Youth began filming in Maryland on Sunday, and SAG vowed to picket the production in which Powell was scheduled to take part.

SAG President William Daniels sent a let-

ter to Powell last week calling on him "as a man of great integrity, who is a role model for so many Americans" to join in honoring the 3-week-old strike by commercial actors.

Powell and the group he has led for three years, however, were not changing their plans, according to Matt Lauer, a spokesman for America's Promise in Alexandria, Va.

"We've invested a lot of resources into this effort and we had a deadline," Lauer said, with the spot to be unveiled at the June 26 National Community Service Conference in Orlando. "We need to move forward as quickly as possible."

The spot featuring Powell and about 260 performers is a call to action asking Americans to help young people in need, Lauer said.

SAG said Powell was scheduled to film on Tuesday, when a picket line would be in place at the production at a Baltimore area reservoir. Lauer said he could not confirm the location or



Powell

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## Study: China deal may hurt deficit

By Martin Crutsinger  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Supporters of a landmark trade bill with China have a ticklish problem — the government's major study of the measure indicates it will make America's already huge trade deficit with China worse rather than better.

U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky, who requested the review, calls the finished product "a very incomplete study, and to be frank, not much utilized." But opponents have gleefully seized on the report by the U.S.

International Trade Commission to do their own analysis projecting the

Clinton China deal will result in the loss of 872,000 American jobs over the next decade. Preposterous, says the Clinton administration, which published its own state-by-state assessment that proclaimed the China deal would "open new export and employment opportunities in all 50 states."

Meanwhile, both sides mounted a frenzied last-minute lobbying blitz Monday in advance of this week's House vote on the deal that would make permanent normal trade relations with China. "We're making progress," declared President Clinton. But a dwindling number of undecideds — perhaps a dozen or slightly more — continued to hold the balance with 218 the number needed for passage in the 435-member House. Supporters hope for at least 150 Republican votes and about 70 Democratic votes. If such a margin materialized, and supporters say it remains in doubt — the measure would win by just two votes.

Supporters did pick up at least two formerly undecided Republicans on Monday — Tom Campbell of California and Jim DeMint of South Carolina. Campbell said he feared congressional rejection "would compel the Chinese government to respond with extremely high tariffs on American goods exported to their markets."

As in the huge debate over free trade with Mexico in 1993, both sides offer starkly different views of the future if Congress passes legislation that would end the annual congressional review of China's trade privileges. Clinton and his economic team contend the China agreement is a no-brainer. All the trade concessions are being made by China. In return for America's support for its bid to join the World Trade Organization, China would dismantle barriers that U.S. corporations and farmers have long complained about.

The trade commission did predict that U.S. exports would rise by 10 percent with U.S. farmers the biggest winners. But it also predicted imports from China to the U.S. would rise by 7 percent.

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