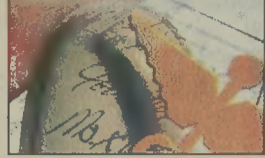


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Health Watch



The nature of miracles

By Alicia Chang  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALBANY, N.Y. — If you ask why little Brandon Connor's tumor suddenly disappeared on the eve of his surgery, his doctors will try their best to explain.

Perhaps a cellular switch clicked on, or maybe it was a faulty diagnosis. But ask Brandon's mother and she calls it a miracle.

Many doctors don't use the "m" word, a concept that carries mystic or religious overtones. An unexpected recovery is an unusual wrinkle in their scientific beliefs, but it does happen.

"You get surprises because diseases have their own personality, and every once in a while, a disease that's usually bad behaves in a more indolent fashion," said Dr. David Steinberg, an oncologist at the Lahey Clinic Medical Center in Burlington, Mass.

For more than a decade during the Christmas season, Steinberg has highlighted "miracle cases" at the clinic, presenting tales of remarkable recoveries to lift the spirits of doctors and nurses.

There are different reasons some patients mysteriously get better. Sometimes, it has to do with the biology of the disease. Other times, a patient may belong to the lucky 1 percent of the population who respond to treatment.

Someone may also live longer than expected because of a misdiagnosis that predicted a shorter life. And then there are recoveries that have no clear-cut explanation: like the case of 2-year-old Brandon Connor of suburban Atlanta, or Tim Kaczmarek of Pennsylvania whose dying heart repaired itself, or Stacey Perrotta of New York who survived a rare cancer that produced a softball-sized tumor.

In Brandon's case, doctors discovered a strange lump growing near his spine while he was still inside his mother's womb. Five weeks after he was born, the Connors received bad news: Brandon had neuroblastoma, one of the deadliest forms of childhood cancers.

Surgery was risky since it could result in paralysis. So doctors decided just to monitor the marble-sized tumor, since sometimes such growths spontaneously disappear in babies before they turn 1.

But Brandon kept growing, and the tumor didn't go away. Finally, after he turned 2, Kristin and Mike Connor decided to take action.

The couple went to the University of California at San Francisco where a neurosurgeon agreed to operate. But on the eve of the surgery last month, the tumor all but vanished. A scan showed no sign of the mass, only fatty tissue.

"It was a miracle," said Kristin Connor, who was stunned to hear the good news. "It was surreal to us that this could have possibly happened."

Doctors believed Brandon's tumor may have been a neuroblastoma that committed cellular suicide — an action

Please see **MIRACLES/3B**

# Caretaker of Kwanzaa spirit

By Artellia Burch  
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Gerry Chisolm, is Charlotte's Queen of Kwanzaa.

Chisolm, executive director of Nubian Rootz Cultural Center, has taken responsibility of celebrating and informing Charlotte on Kwanzaa's importance.

Kwanzaa was established in 1966 by Maulana Karenga, professor and chair of the Black Studies Department at California State University. It was born in the midst of the Black Freedom Movement.

Kwanzaa, which takes place Dec. 26-Dec. 31, builds off five fundamental activities of continental African first fruit celebrations: ingathering, reverence, commemoration, recommitment and celebration.

It's a cultural holiday, not a religious one practiced by people who come together based on the rich, ancient and varied common ground of their Africanness regardless of religious faiths.

Charlotte celebrations will be held at the Afro-American Cultural and Sugaw Creek Recreation Center.

Chisolm orchestrates events connected to the celebration. She also does the legwork of passing out flyers and spreading the news by

word of mouth. In the midst of giving an interview, she placed flyers in mailboxes and in person in the Dillehay Courts community.

Chisolm says she doesn't mind doing the manual labor required continuing the success of Charlotte's biggest Kwanzaa event.

"I love being out here with my people," she said. "I claim the whole community. Not just the part that makes me comfortable. I'm out here trying to put my love into action."

Chisolm says it's her job to reach out equally to each part of the black community and the community at large about Kwanzaa and the importance of African culture in today's society.

"I have a moral and spiritual obligation not to leave any family behind," she said. "We (Nubian Rootz) measure ourselves by how far we get in every community. I measure my value by how much time I spend helping others outside of my family. One day the children in our community will grow up and they will want to know where were you. It's all our responsibility to leave the community a lot better than we inherited it."

According to Chisolm, it's the involvement of adults that has grounded her and made her concerned about sharing the history and culture of Africa.

"Kwanzaa is the time to celebrate our

African ancestry," she said. "One thing we all have in common is we're all children from Africa and we need to reconnect with it. We need to celebrate ourselves."

"Kwanzaa isn't to be mistaken for African American history month when we celebrate the accomplishments of the African who has overcome the tremendous obstacle of being enslaved."

Chisolm says after attending Kwanzaa events she hopes participants realize that there's greatness in everyone.

"We will get reacquainted with our culture," she said. "Our culture is important because it helps to bring us back to the center. When you don't have a blueprint for living you shoot from the hip."

"Our culture teaches us to face adversity and consult our elders. I wish we could reconnect and reclaim the oneness our African Heritage. Kwanzaa is a wonderful and festive time. We're teaching and producing information to connect ourselves to it to and engage people in a non-threatening way."

"Kwanzaa is important because our African heritage is a springboard from which we can all bounce and fly as high and as determined as we wish."

For information on Kwanzaa events, call Chisolm at (704) 597-5258.



Gerry Chisolm, founder of Nubian Rootz Cultural Center, spearheads many of Charlotte's Kwanzaa events.

PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

- (The Seven Principles)**  
**Umoja** (Unity) To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.
- Kujichagullia** (Self-Determination) To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.
- Ujima** (Collective Work and Responsibility) To build and maintain our community together and make our brother's and sister's problems our problems and to solve them together.
- Ujamaa** (Cooperative Economics) To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.
- Nia** (Purpose) To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.
- Kuumba** (Creativity) To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.
- Imani** (Faith) To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

## Thurmond's illegitimate daughter may sell story



Washington-Williams

By Asjlynn Loder  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Essie Mae Washington-Williams is eager to tell her story as the

daughter of the late U.S. Sen. Strom Thurmond and a black maid.

"I've heard from feature-film producers, television networks and I just completed a meeting with a book publisher," said Washington-Williams' attorney Frank Wheaton. "Prayerfully, we'll be able to come up with a story that is good for all of America and will reach a general audience as well as an audience that might be affected by similarities."

Washington-Williams, a resident of Los Angeles, announced her long-kept secret earlier this week.

Thurmond was 22 and her mother Carrie Butler, a housekeeper in the Thurmond home, was 16 when Washington-Williams was born in Aiken in 1925, she said. She was taken to Pennsylvania six months later and raised by an aunt and uncle, seeing her mother for the first time when she was 13. She said she first met

Thurmond when she was 16. Thurmond died June 26 at the age of 100 without ever publicly acknowledging Washington-Williams as his daughter.

The Thurmond family has acknowledged her claim. The senator did not mention her in his will bequeathing gifts to his three other living children.

"I think this story is big enough to capture all mediums, books, television, in an epic form, as well as feature

form at the movies," said Wheaton, an entertainment lawyer based in Los Angeles. "We're not excluding anyone." But Wheaton said he wants what is best for Washington-Williams.

"In this case, you pick and choose the individual or entity that suits her needs," said Wheaton. "We want someone who is sensitive and clear about what the story is about and certainly someone who is capable."

