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WEEK OF MAY 27-JUNE 3, 2004

Programs battle to stay in budget

By Herbert L. White
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Mecklenburg County is going through the budgetary version of musical chairs.

Programs that face potential cuts rally to hang on to funding while county commissioners debate which are to be cut, boosted or left alone.

The Court Clubhouse Children's Play and Care Center is targeted for cuts.

The center, which cares for children of jurors and witnesses in 26th Judicial District cases, is expected to lose half its county funding — \$50,000.

"That's not enough for us to continue to provide services we've been accustomed to providing the last three years," said Gloria Peters, the center's director. "We will continue lobbying the commissioners to fund us fully."

Commissioners will decide on a budget on June 15. A public hearing will be held Tuesday at the Government center. County Manager Harry Jones is recommending a \$1.1 billion budget for the 2004-05 fiscal year, which starts July 1.

On Wednesday, activists from Justice, Not Just Us In Education announced their intention to lobby commissioners to deny Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' request for \$290 million next year, an increase of \$25 million. Jones has recommended \$276 million, but the group wants funding to stay at \$265 million. School officials plan to apply any increase to expansion pro-

See MECKLENBURG/3A

Charles Brown isn't trying to reinvent Charlotte-Mecklenburg's public libraries. He wants to expand them.

Turning the page



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Charles Brown, director of the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, didn't expect to make a career out of working in libraries. But he's led library systems in Minneapolis, Minn., San Francisco and Columbus, Ohio.

By Cheris F. Hodges
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Thirty-five years ago, Charles Brown walked into the downtown library in his hometown of St. Louis and applied for a job.

Brown, director of the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, didn't expect to make a career out of working in libraries.

"I started spending a lot of

time in the downtown library and I decided to go upstairs and apply for a job," he said. "It was a real fluke."

Brown's fluke turned into a lifelong career. He has led library systems in Minneapolis, Minn., San Francisco, Calif., and Columbus, Ohio.

Brown hasn't planned any major changes to Charlotte's library system, but he is looking to expand the hours of operation at the Freedom

Regional Library and Sugar Creek Branch.

The Freedom branch's hours are Monday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m., Tuesday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., and Friday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. The library is closed on Saturday and Sunday.

The Sugar Creek branch is open Monday-Thursday from, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from, 1 p.m.-6 p.m. The library is

Please see LIBRARY/3A

Majority aims for veto-proof contracts

Kinsey key to council's small business vote

By Herbert L. White
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The direction of Charlotte's Small Business Program rests with one City Council member — Democrat Patsy Kinsey.

Her absence from a vote on whether the city should give specific goals for minority-owned businesses on city construction contracts led to Mayor Pat McCrory's veto. Six Democrats supported the goals. Kinsey is in China and didn't vote. She'll be back June 7, her son David said.

"Patsy has the right to make her own decision, said council member Malcolm Graham, a Democrat. "I think she'll thorough in making her decision. I trust her judgment."

But Kinsey will likely hear numerous pitches from both sides by the time council votes again. In an April committee meeting, Kinsey indicated support for citywide participation goals.

Republicans on the board and McCrory have

Please see DEMOCRATS/3A

Program takes the worry out of kids' adoption fears

By Cheris F. Hodges
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Part of a year-long series on adoption and foster care in Mecklenburg County.

Once a child is adopted and brought into a new home, Mecklenburg County Youth and Family

Services wants to make sure he or she is comfortable with the new family.

"A lot of times children don't want to be hurt," said Amy Ciceron with Youth and Family Services.

When a child is 12 years old, he or she has the option to object to adoption. Ciceron said children don't want to be rejected. So, the department works with other agencies in what is

Please see PROGRAM/3A

Black students still struggle in post-Brown America

By Hazel Trice Edney
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON — Now that most of the hoopla surrounding the 50th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court case outlawing "separate but equal" schools has receded, major education problems still face African-American students.

Among them:

- African-American fourth-graders are 28 percentage points behind their white counterparts in reading, according to the U.S. Department of Education;
- While 74.9 percent of whites who enter the 9th grade currently graduate with a regular diploma from high school, only 50.2 percent of blacks do, according to a Harvard University Civil Rights

Project Study titled, "Losing our Future;"

- Between 1990 and 2000, the average percentage of white students at or above basic achievement levels in math was 72 percent; for blacks, that number was 32 percent, according to the National Center for Education Statistics;
- According to the Advancement Project, black students comprise 17 percent of public school

enrollment, but account for 33 percent of the suspensions and

- According to another Harvard Civil Rights Project Study, titled, "Brown at 50: King's Dream or Plessy's Nightmare?" at a time the nation is celebrating the Brown decision, our schools are growing increasingly segregated.

"Most of the children who

Please see BLACK/6A



Futrell

the box NEWS, NOTES & TRENDS

The Eastside Community Development Corporation will host a motorsports exhibition next month.

The Race To Success exhibition and fair will be held June 26 from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at Eastland Mall. Showcars and pit crew demonstrations will be on display. College recruiters and a fashion show will also be included. Motorsports professionals will also be on hand to talk about career opportunities in the racing industry.

For more information, call (704) 563-2100.

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