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BUSINESS

PEOPLE OF PROMINENCE



Bryant Barber

Barber a native player

Bobcats exec a longtime Charlotte advocate

By Erica Bryant
SPECIAL TO THE POST

LaRita Barber is vice president for community relations and player development for the Charlotte Bobcats.

The Charlotte native has held a number of jobs in the area, including positions with the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute, Queens College, and the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce.

Barber is one of five honorees for this year's Charlotte Post People of Prominence - Women of Distinction awards. The public is invited to attend the awards ceremony on May 4 at 6 p.m. at Spirit Square. Along with the awards presentation, there will be an interesting conversation with the honorees about their careers, family, life lessons, and passions outside of work. Attendees will also have an opportunity to ask questions. Tickets are on sale now.

Following is an excerpt of an interview with LaRita Barber about some of the secrets to her success.

EB: In all of your years of working, what are some mistakes that you've seen others make that may have prevented them from achieving the success that you have?

LB: I never really like to think of things as mistakes. I like to think of them as learning opportunities for you to grow. It's a chance to expand yourself and build your character through those examples. I would say as I've been in management and observed managers around me that I value management that leads by example. I respect management that sets a good course for others to follow, and that is in tune with the people involved in the company's mission. Without the people or employees and their vested interest, the company is just a name and a building.

EB: Sometimes people can get hung up on status and titles. What are some misconceptions that people might have about you and your job title? What might they find surprising?

LB: I find that we sometimes get caught up in what people do, and not who they are. I just want people to know that I am just LaRita. I'm a person that tries to do her best to make a difference, and I've got the same insecurities as everybody else. But what I have learned is that I surround myself with good people. I am a person of great faith and belief. I put my trust in God that whatever I'm involved in it is according to His path. I am being ordered, and that is part of my purpose. I just try to be obedient to that purpose. All of the titles don't mean

Please see ENERGY/8C



PHOTO: WADE NASH

Livingstone College senior Goldie Phillips started Island Flavors, a Caribbean foodservice company, to pay for tuition for graduate school. Phillips is a native of Trinidad and Tobago.

Cooking for tuition

Livingstone scholar turns entrepreneur for grad school

The food is real good, because Goldie puts her love into it.

By Eric Bozeman
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Goldie Phillips is cooking her way to graduate school.

The Livingstone College senior wants to further her education in the U.S., so Phillips decided to bring Caribbean flavor to the Salisbury campus by creating Island Flavas, a food-service startup that prepares food and drinks. She's using the profits to pay for graduate school.

"I just used this as an opportunity to introduce my culture," said Phillips, a native of Trinidad and Tobago. "I wanted to let them know about special-

ties from other islands."

Phillips is on a full scholarship at Livingstone, but U.S. immigration law prohibits the biology major from working while on a student visa. Financial help from her parents was going to be difficult. So necessarily gave birth to a culinary idea over the Christmas break.

"My parents can't afford to help me, and anything I might need after paying for tuition, room and board would have to come from me," Phillips said. "I saw a profit the first week, but it was a small one, then it started picking up after that."

Another reason business started picking up was the help Phillips gets from classmate Marsha Finch. Finch has noticed the impact Island Flavas has had on the students and faculty.

"The food is real good, because Goldie puts her love into it," said Finch, a student from the U.S. Virgin Islands. "Kids in the U.S. don't experience island food, but the majority of them want to try it, and her food is so good that different people ask for her to cater food over and over again."

One interesting item that Please see COOKING/8C

Drug maker breaks ground with race-based treatment

By Mark Jewell
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LEXINGTON, Mass. - After services at a predominantly black church in Atlanta, parishioners in their Sunday best roll up their sleeves to get their blood pressure checked at a health screening where they learn about symptoms of heart failure and a new drug approved only for use in blacks.

At another black church in Detroit and a black health fair in Chicago, participants pick up pamphlets about the drug BiDil that are filled with patients' smiling black faces - not the usual sea of white faces with just a smattering of minorities.

In the nine months since BiDil became the first drug approved for a specific racial group, NitroMed Inc has been sticking with narrowly targeted, home-spun-style pitches as it tries to turn around disappointing initial sales that led two top executives to resign last month.

There's no plan to abandon NitroMed's grassroots-style marketing in favor of mass-media ad campaigns that accompany many drug launches. Meanwhile,

NitroMed's sales force is focusing only on 144 U.S. metropolitan areas that have large black populations.

Such targeted marketing approaches are expected to become more common as technology continues to advance so treatments are more frequently tailored to individuals' genetic make-ups.

"In a sense, BiDil is a trial balloon for personalized medicine," said B.J. Jones, NitroMed's vice president of marketing.

In the near future, drug makers could get medications initially approved for a single racial group - then eventually seek even more narrow clearance for use among people with specific gene types. NitroMed said last month that researchers have identified gene variations that may determine which patients are most likely to benefit from BiDil - variations that aren't exclusive to blacks, meaning the drug might someday be approved for people of other races as well.

"Race is only a surrogate for ultimately looking at one's particular

Please see BIDIL/8C



The heart. The right (blue) side of the heart pumps blood to the lungs, where it picks up oxygen. The left (red) side of the heart then pumps the blood throughout the body, where it delivers oxygen to all the body's cells.

Heart failure causes the heart to pump less efficiently. This can lead to some common symptoms:

- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Swelling (especially in the feet, ankles, and abdomen)

Black business start-ups grow

Rate is four times national rate from 1997-2002

By Stephen Ohlemacher
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The number of businesses owned by black entrepreneurs grew more than four times the national rate for all businesses from 1997 to 2002, the federal government said Tuesday. Black entrepreneurs owned 1.2 million businesses in 2002, an increase of 45 percent from 1997, according to a report by the Census Bureau.

"It's encouraging to see not just the number but the sales and receipts of black-owned businesses are growing at such a robust rate, confirming that these firms are among the fastest-growing segments of our economy," Census Bureau Director Louis Kincaid said in a statement.

Revenues from black-owned businesses increased by 25 percent during the period, to about \$89 billion. Overall, black entrepreneurs owned 5 percent of U.S. businesses in 2002. Hispanics owned about 7 percent, and women of all races and ethnicities owned 28 percent, according to the Census Bureau.

"I'm proud," said Harry Alford, president and CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce. "We're the fastest-growing segment."

Alford said black entrepreneurs have been helped by improved education levels and increased incomes among black consumers and business owners.

"We've got the first generation of significant growth."

Please see BLACK/8C

Wachovia reports higher 1st quarter profit

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Charlotte-based Wachovia Corp., the fourth-largest U.S. bank, reported Monday its first quarter profit rose 7 percent from the year-ago period, boosted by higher overall revenue and fee income.

Profit rose to \$1.73 billion, or \$1.09 per share, for the January-March period from \$1.62 billion, or \$1.01 per share, a year earlier. Total revenue rose to \$7.06 billion from \$6.47 billion in the year-ago period.

"We continued to see excellent sales production, top-notch customer service and market share gains throughout our businesses," said Chairman and Chief Executive Ken Thompson in a statement. "We continued to gain leverage from improving our efficiency, while at the same time investing significantly for future revenue growth."

Wal-Mart's dilemma: Boost low-cost model

By Anne D'Innocenzo
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK - After years of accusations that it caused the demise of thousands of smaller merchants, Wal-Mart Stores Inc. is undertaking an unusual strategy: helping competing local establishments stay in business.

Wal-Mart recasting itself as a friendly neighbor? It's the latest course change by the world's largest merchant as it tries to modify its corporate culture - and the perception that it's a ruthless competitor obsessed with maintaining its dominance of the retail industry.

Wal-Mart's proposal to help rival small businesses, from bakeries to hardware stores, focuses on blighted urban markets where the retailer plans to open 50 stores within the next two years. The efforts will range from giving those businesses financial grants to producing free radio ads that will be broadcast on its stores' radio network.

The image makeover extends to Wal-Mart's selling floor as well. In recent months,

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