

Volunteers spend week boosting Reid Park

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from World Changers, a faith-based organization — are in Reid Park repairing 11 homes. The kids came to Charlotte from across the southeast to paint, repair drywall and fix roofs.

"We're thrilled that these young volunteers are willing to use their summer vacation to serve so selflessly in our community," said Stan Wilson, housing services manager for the city Department of Neighborhood Development.

The city of Charlotte donated building supplies and Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse chipped in safety basics like fire extinguishers, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

Reid Park, considered a challenged neighborhood by the city because of economic and crime concerns, is one of nine communities selected by the City Council for assistance through its Neighborhood Action Plan Initiative. The partnership between the city, corporations and non-profits like World Changers and Habitat for Humanity, gives homeowners like Potts, 77, a boost. Volunteers come into the neighborhood monthly to help with projects ranging from trash removal to mentoring.

"We're helping the elderly today, and that's important," Capers said. "They aren't able to get out and do, so we're out doing what we can to beautify their homes."

Mark Probin, a sales associate at Lowe's University store, installed smoke detectors and fire extinguishers as well as plants in Potts' yard.

"It's a safety aspect," he said. "We're trying to give back as much as we can, and coming out for a few hours sweating is worth it. It makes the place a little nicer."

Some of Reid Park's oldest homes are World War II-era Army barracks converted to residential use, White said. For most of its 50 years, the

Potts home was a haven for family and neighbors alike. The revitalization effort and involvement of a fledgling neighborhood association are starting to produce results.

"The family home is not the family home anymore," White said. "This was the

'Soul Food' house. Every Sunday, all the adult grand-kids would cook dinner and bring it all here. We'd take pictures of kids playing, it was wonderful. But the spirit was broken when my grandfather (Grier Potts) got sick. It's coming back, slowly."

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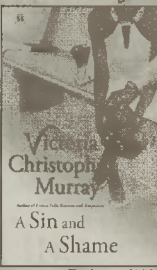
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NAACP admits inflating numbers

By Hazel Trice Edney
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON — The NAACP, which has claimed an inflated 500,000 members for 60 years, has announced a new membership drive to finally reach that goal.

"We're flat. We're not where we need to be. Civil rights should be a growth business because there are a lot of conditions in this country that require it," says Bruce Gordon, nearing his first year as president.

For years, the NAACP has inflated its membership numbers, according to sources that have seen membership records. The last four executive directors/presidents — Benjamin L. Hooks, Kweisi Mfume, Ben Chavis, and now Bruce Gordon — have cited a membership level of 500,000. However, sources with direct knowledge of the figures, say the actual number fluctuates between 150,000 and 250,000 members.

The Baltimore Sun said in a story two years ago that the NAACP has been reporting the 500,000 figure since 1946.

Gordon says he has confirmed an active membership of less than 300,000 after ordering a methodical search of membership data.

"Those are accurate data according to membership files," Gordon says.



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