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LIFE

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IN RELIGION
Faith leads to
apology for inaction
in the face of
racism

Rockets' red glare can be dangerous

By Erica Singleton
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

As Americans gear up to celebrate July 4, the nation is stocking up on hot dogs for cookouts, flags for waving, and fireworks, for well, fireworks displays. While fun and food are on everyone's minds, safety isn't always. In 2004, fireworks accidents sent 6,600 people to emergency rooms during the Independence holiday weekend alone, according to data from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. There were almost 10,000 fireworks-related injuries for the whole year, a 300 injury increase from 2003. For this reason, Prevent Blindness America, the nation's oldest eye health and safety organization, urges revelers to leave the fireworks to the professionals.

"We can't stress enough how dangerous fireworks are, especially to children," said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of PBA. Safety Commission data shows that 40 percent of all fireworks injuries are to people ages 15 and younger. Most injuries tend to be to the hands and fingers, but the second most common type are contusions, lacerations, debris in, and burns to the eyes. Eye injuries often take longer to heal and could result in permanent vision loss. "No one ever intends to get hurt while playing with [fireworks]," said Garrett, "but they really are an accident waiting to happen."

Fireworks and rockets can be very unpredictable, as you can't always predict their flight path or when they will explode, but sparklers created the greatest number of injuries in children 14 and younger in 2004.

"No one would dream of handing a torch burning at 1,800 degrees to a child, but that essentially is what a sparkler is," said Garrett. "That's hot enough to melt gold."

Smelting aside, commission reports show that even devices considered to be "safe and sane" are dangerous, and data from the U.S. Eye Injury Registry shows that bystanders are more often injured by fireworks than operators themselves.

Fireworks can explode in the hand, throw sparks into the face, cast hot fragments onto limbs and ignite clothing.

The list of injuries from 2004 include five victims struck in the eye by bottle rockets, 1,100 sparkler made injuries, and eight people killed due to fireworks. Males tended to suffer three times the injuries as females. PBA suggests attending the spectacular free event offered here in Charlotte. "Safe Summer Celebrations" with creative ideas on how to celebrate without fireworks.

If you still feel like you must fire off your own display, PBA offers a safety quiz on its website with information on how to handle accidents. If someone's eye is injured in a fireworks accident and there are specks in the eye.

- DO NOT rub the eye
- Lift the upper eyelid outward and down over the lower lid

- Try to let tears wash out specks or particles

If speck doesn't wash out, keep eye closed, bandage



PHOTOS/BAG, BORROW, STEAL

Bag, Borrow or Steal is an online shopping site that allows customers to borrow or buy top of the line handbags without long-term commitments.

By Erica Singleton
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The summer wedding and party season is underway. With your dresses and outfits together, now you need the perfect accessories. If you're running low on cash, a Seattle company has a solution that will allow you to update your look without breaking the bank.

"The easiest way to describe it is Net Flix for designer handbags," said Bag, Borrow, or Steal director of merchandising

Website has high-end bags without busting the budget

and fashion director, Brenda Kauffman. Bag, Borrow, or Steal is an online membership service that allows consumers to borrow designer handbags for extended periods. The website gives fashion conscious consumers access to thousands of bags they would not have access to otherwise, or might not have

been able to afford at retail.

"Leasing luxury is the way of the future," said Kauffman. "It's always worked with cars."

Bag, Borrow, or Steal was founded in 2004 by Lloyd Lapidus and Greg Pippo, who saw their wives, sisters, mothers constantly looking for handbags to complete an

outfit or to carry for a special occasion. "They realized there was something to this," said Kauffman.

All bags available on the site have been purchased by Bag, Borrow or Steal through designers or authorized dealers.

Here's how it all works. The existing membership system has three levels: Trendsetter, Princess, and Diva. Starting at \$19.95 a month, up to \$99.95, each level allows access to a different "closet" of handbags.

Please see HIGH/2B

Don't forget manners at summer gatherings

By Erica Singleton
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

We've all been there - in a meeting, movie, or dinner where someone answers their cell phone. Maybe they expressed that they were busy and hung up, or maybe they talked for a while. Either way, when did we lose the ability to enjoy a

social outing, without taking a phone call, or responding to a text message? Is it appropriate to send an email invitation to a wedding? Are the rules of decorum that former newspaper columnists wrote about outdated, or have we just lost our manners?

"Over the past 15-20 years, people have become

much more casual about etiquette," said Jim Carter, president of Ophelia DeVore Associates at Ophelia DeVore Enterprises. The son of model Ophelia DeVore, who first began offering etiquette training for women of color in 1946, Carter heads the organization which now includes etiquette, charm and overall

presentation for men and women, as well as professional training for corporations.

DeVore, by using her modeling background, started her program to make a statement for the real identity of women of color. They were more than just laborers, housekeepers or bearers

Please see ETIQUETTE/2B

More black couples jump into swinging set

By Cheri F. Hodges
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Believe it or not, conservative banking Charlotte is a major hub for swingers and many of them are black.

That's probably one reason why Greensboro author Torrian Ferguson's novel "Swingers" is one of Dynasty Bookstore's best sellers.

Ferguson had no intentions of writing - it isn't even his passion. But when someone told him about the issues that he and his wife were having after they tried swinging, Ferguson's interest was peaked.

"I didn't think that this was something that African Americans did," he said.

Ferguson was even more shocked to find that in Greensboro there were swinging parties.

Those in attendance ran the gamut of blue collar workers to executives. "I assumed that only soccer moms did this," he said.

Ferguson, who doesn't swing, said he doesn't judge swingers and doesn't consid-

er himself an expert on the subject. But it is clear more blacks are beginning to take part in this lifestyle.

According to Carolinapassion.com, swinging, sometimes referred to as the swinging lifestyle or simply the lifestyle, includes a wide range of sexual activities conducted between three or more people.

Swinging can include watching others have sex, having sex with your partner while being watched (called "soft" swinging), or exchanging sex partners, which is the most common definition.

Typically, swinging activities occur when a married, or otherwise committed, couple engages in the above mentioned activities with a couple or single individual. These acts may or may not occur in the same room and may or may not include bisexual interaction.

Some "lifestyle" activities are highly organized. Most major cities have at least one major swing club in a permanent location, often keep-

ing a low profile to avoid negative attention. Swingers also meet through lifestyle magazines, personal ads, swinging house parties, and the Internet.

The web site also lists Charlotte as being the largest swinging city in the Carolinas, followed by

Raleigh, Greensboro, Durham, Winston-Salem and Fayetteville.

South Carolina cities Charleston, Columbia, Greenville and Rock Hill also made the list.

As with other instances of integration, black couples

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PHOTO/THE STOCK MARKET

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