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 Services class held
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 Mrs. Hicks honored
 by Woman's Club 1-B


Edenton Town Councilman Jerald Perry, Sr. presents Gregory Bonner, Edenton Chief of Police, with an award during the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday celebration. The award was presented in honor of Chief Bonner's community involvement. (Staff photo by Derrick Armstead)

King Day event looks at state of race relations

BY DERRICK ARMSTEAD
Staff Writer

Speakers at Monday's Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration focused on the changing landscape of race relations — looking at both what's been accomplished since Dr. King's time and what remains to be done.

Dr. Claude McKay, president of the College of Albemarle system, was the keynote speaker at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. event Monday, Jan. 17, in the E.A. Swain Auditorium in Edenton.

Joining McKay were several local and state officials including, Edenton Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton, N.C. House of Representatives member William T. Culpepper III, Mayor Roland Vaughn and Edenton-Chowan Board of Education Chairman Glorious Elliott.

"No one group holds a monopoly on goodness or righteousness," said McKay.

McKay also provided an anecdote that left many in the audience nodding their heads in agreement when he told the story of a young girl's response to the following question.

If all good people were red and all bad people were green, then what color would you like to be?

"Not surprisingly, most of the kids said they would rather be red and not green," said McKay. "However, one girl responded by

saying that she would rather be streaky because she was wise enough to know that she neither all bad nor all good, but she was a little good and bad."

McKay also addressed the children, many of whom have not directly faced discrimination or struggles in today's society.

"They cannot imagine a world without 60 channels or BET (Black Entertainment Television)," said McKay.

McKay added, "whites do not have a monopoly on stereotypes," and that we all must examine our own biases and preconceived notions in regard to other races.

Gregory Bonner, Edenton chief of police, also spoke directly to the young after receiving an honorary award.

"If you feel that you cannot be President ... then be a U.S. Senator," said Bonner. "When I was growing up I always wanted to be a police officer and through diligent efforts you see where it has gotten me today."

The audience also heard the voices of the Children's Community Choir. Directed by Gloria Beasley, the group's rendition of R. Kelly's "I Believe I Can Fly" came on the heels of the choir's first selection of "Shake the Devil Off."

Both musical selections were well received, and Knighton linked the choir's performances and the McKay's speech.

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Edenton blasts cable company for premature rise in rates

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Editor

The local cable provider was roasted during the January Edenton Town Council meeting for what Mayor Roland Vaughn called a "public relations fiasco."

Vaughn said that much of the bad feeling that currently exists between local cable subscribers and MediaCom was caused by an early rate hike with the expectation that upgrade work would be completed within a 60 to 90 day period. Today, customers are still waiting for the project to be finished.

He said that so far projected completion dates put forth by the company have been "meaningless."

"We get a different date every time we call," Mayor Vaughn said. "We need something definitive."

He added service response to customer problems has ranged from "inconsistent to no service at all."

Councilman Jimmy Stallings said that where he and Councilman Jerry Parks live, "We don't have service now." He reminded MediaCom officials seated in the audience that the town was originally promised that upgrade work on the cable system would be completed by Sept. 1, and most recently, by Dec. 15. Stallings said that some local MediaCom employees are telling people that the company won't be able to complete the upgrade until March 1 because it failed to purchase necessary equipment to complete the work on time — a charge denied by the company.

But, he said, there was also the issue of the town's assurances to customers, based on conversations with MediaCom, that upgrades would be done in a timely manner.

"One of the things that concerns me, we are making a total liar of our city manager (because the company has not met its projected completion dates)...our phones are ringing off the hook with complaints, and our hands are tied."

Councilman Jerry Parks said he just wanted MediaCom to tell subscribers, and the Council, the truth about when they could expect upgrade work to be finished.

"I guess what I want to say is, I would rather you tell me what you think is a realistic date, than to tell me what you think I might want to hear," he said.

Councilman Steve Biggs said flatly that he intends to drop his cable service and purchase a satellite dish because he has such bitter feelings about the situation.

"If you don't service people, they quit doing business with you," he said. "I'd love to see us (town) get out of this contract."

Nancy Morgan, administrative assistant to County Manager Cliff Copeland, said that county residents, too, are fed up.

"We've done everything we can, and we are just really frustrated," she said. "It's (delays) really getting to be an old story. If we communicated with our citizens on other issues the way we've had to on this cable service, we'd have been run out of town a long time ago. I've never seen people so unhappy."

MediaCom Regional General Manager Don Zagorski acknowledged that 86 percent of local homes have cable service, and said that

Managers respond in writing

(Editor's Note: The following letter, written by Edenton Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton, and bearing her signature and that of County Manager Cliff Copeland, was written to Don Zagorski, Regional General Manager of MediaCom, on Jan. 14.)

Dear Don:

This letter will serve as a follow-up to the Council meeting you and other MediaCom officials attended here on Jan. 11, 2000. I trust that you understand the immediate problems at hand. Our residents are frustrated with the unreliable service that has been the result of the still on-going upgrade. Compound the unreliable and unsatisfactory service many have been enduring since the early summer, with the very poor customer service they encounter when trying to report service problems — it's not surprising that tempers were running hot Tuesday evening.

The third immediate problem MediaCom has is that it chose to levy a rate increase in June, under the pretense that the upgrade would take 60 to 90 days. Our customers have been paying higher rates for months now, and have not received the service they were promised. Therefore, I formally request that you roll back the rate increase, give our customers a credit or rebate, and not increase rates until all problems are corrected.

I am not satisfied with the company line of "...what about the customers that received service, and did not have a problem with the upgrade..." My response is, a credit on everyone's bill will go a long way towards improving customer relations in Edenton and Chowan County. In addition, rolling back the rates after all our customers have put up with, is the right thing to do.

The last immediate problem is determining when this upgrade will be complete and our customers will have the quality service they were promised in June, and (have) been dearly paying for since July. Please give me a realistic, firm date when we can expect all trouble spots to be repaired and put in good order and a promise that if the completion date can't be met, we will be notified in advance in writing.

Anne-Marie Knighton
Town Manager
Cliff Copeland
County Manager

CAC plans innovative fundraiser Saturday

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Editor

What's better than a delicious bowl of hot soup on a cold winter evening? How about a beautiful, handcrafted bowl to put it in — and to keep for your very own?

That's just what local residents who participate in the Chowan Arts Council's annual fundraiser this Saturday evening from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m. will get to do.

But that's not all.

"When you come to our fundraiser this weekend, you won't just be enjoying some great soup, seeing the wonderful exhibit of drawings by Annie Hudgins Bond Webb, and the chance to participate in our silent auction," said CAC Executive Director Sue Clark. "You'll also have the chance to show your support for all the other programs and services we share with this community all year long."

Those services include free community events such as the new Second Tuesday Music Series, a reading by NC Poet Laureate Fred Chappell, the "Sounds of Freedom," the Messiah Sing and "Confection Perfection" during the Candlelight Tour. Your support also makes possible public performances such as the one in 1999 by the North Carolina Youth Tap Ensemble, The Nutcracker and joint shows with the Edenton Little Theatre.

And there's more, Clark said. "When you support us, you are giving your support to an organization that also provides strong exposure to the cultural arts to the students in our local school systems."

that's where the need for financial support comes in, Clark said. "While our membership remains strong, the cost of providing these services continues to climb," Clark said. "If you want to see these

"On Saturday, between 5 o'clock and 8 o'clock, those who join us may pick out a beautiful handmade ceramic bowl of their choice created by a regional potter. We will then fill that bowl with delicious homemade soup and you get to keep the bowl."

"For the cost of a ticket (\$15 in advance, or \$18 at the door), you'll not only get the soup and a bowl, but also receive a drink (soft drink, beer or wine), a slice of fresh baked bread, appetizers and your choice of a sweet treat. You'll also get a chance to view the Annie Hudgins Bond Webb exhibit, enjoy live entertainment by a Jazz band, and take part in our silent auction."

Clark noted that more than 40 auction items have already been donated. They include painted furniture, pottery and stained glass, as well as a children's party, a children's art package, a weekend at the beach, dinner for two at a local restaurant, gift baskets and gift certificates from local businesses. Other donated items include services such as refinishing or painting furniture, and watercolor paintings, pictures, bird houses, bird bath, clothing, a teapot, scarves and jewelry.

Tickets for the fundraiser are now available at the CAC, 200 E. Church St., Edenton, NC 27932 or phone (252) 482-8005.



CAC Director Sue Clark, left, gets some help from assistant Karen Cusic

tem," she added. Those programs include sponsorship of the "Youth in the Arts" program, the JA Holmes Senior Art Show, and three Artists in Residence Programs carried out at all four of the Chowan County schools. "And that's just a little taste of what we do. There is much, much more."

But all of those things don't come without a price tag attached — and

types of programs continue to be offered to your children, and to the public at large, it's important for you to let us know that through your membership. Your membership gives you a voice, a chance for your ideas and talents to be shared with everyone else."

Clark also briefly explained the "Soup and a Bowl" fundraiser that will take place this weekend.

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