

# BellSouth, InnoTech wire Woodson school

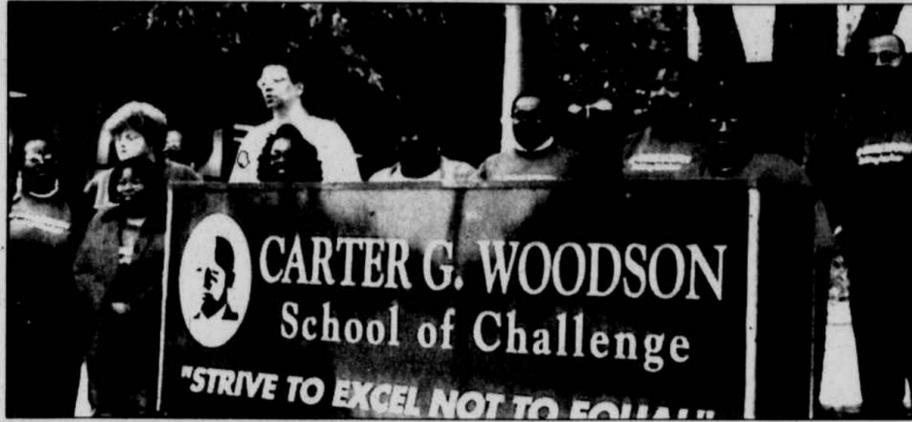
As volunteers converged on North Carolina schools Saturday to help wire classrooms for access to the Internet during NetDay '97, BellSouth and InnoTech Systems & Training brought their technical expertise to Carter G. Woodson School of Challenge on Goodfless Street in Winston-Salem.

Close to 50 BellSouth Pioneer Volunteers, InnoTech representatives and Woodson parents, board members, faculty and community supporters devoted their day to wiring Woodson's new computer lab and classroom space for Internet access.

NetDay is a state and national initiative to wire classrooms across the country for Internet access to bring the boundless resources of the information superhighway into the schools.

"This is a bridge to the 21st century," said Ruth Hopkins, interim principal of the charter school, which was established by African-American parents. "Exposure, exposure, exposure — that's what this is about, for our students to gain access to information." Gaining Internet connections will allow students and faculty at Woodson the benefits of infinite resources, she said.

InnoTech, a local computer con-



BellSouth and InnoTech Systems & Training wired Woodson's new computer lab and classroom space for Internet access Saturday.

sulting and training company, is project coordinator for the event, as well as the school's technology partner.

"We have installed and set up the school's computer lab and classrooms for computer use, and we will implement the Internet access and donate our time for training the teachers," said Claire Robinson, InnoTech's president and co-owner with her husband, Michael. "We know first-hand, in the business we are in, the value of technology-proficient employees, and we are proud to be a NetDay corporate sponsor. As the largest corporate sponsor

of NetDay, BellSouth is contributing more than \$25 million throughout its nine-state service region in wiring materials, telecommunications lines, BellSouth.net Internet accounts and training manuals for schools and teachers' homes, training, classroom telephones and grants to the NetDay effort.

North Carolina schools received approximately \$4 million in free materials, services and grants from BellSouth. The company contributed services valued at over \$300,000 to schools in the Piedmont Triad region.

"Education is BellSouth's No. 1 community focus," said Lynn Roberson, BellSouth's corporate and external affairs director in Forsyth county. "As a telecommunications and Internet provider, NetDay is a great match for us. Our BellSouth Pioneer Volunteers also bring expertise to a project like this, since we are BellSouth employees, retirees and family members, and we know the value of strong communications and the local community. For information, call Lynn Roberson at 722-9061, Claire Robinson at 725-7252 or Ruth Hopkins at 723-6838.

## ENFIELD

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rated because those same people who help put money into the town coffers have no say in how that money is spent.

"If people living in those enclaves around town could vote, Plant Street would have sewer lines, too. But the commissioners won't annex them. They won't allow them to vote, and that makes Halifax County next to being a third-world country," fumes Hardaway.

"I've been beat up in the press," says Hardaway in reference to news stories that have focused on the method he's used to shed light on what he considers the real problem: modern day discrimination. Despite criticism for boycotting town board meetings, Hardaway says, he won't quit fighting for what he believes is right.

"The three blacks on the town governing body — Hardaway, Bud Whitaker and James Sledge — refused to pass a budget for next year as a way to get the town's three white commissioners to give in on the sewer line issue. But their efforts to block the budget were met by legal maneuvers by the town attorney. Before long, reporters were writing about the failed budget and the black commissioners' refusal to attend meetings.

The standoff went on for three months before the state local Government Commission resolved the crisis by passing a \$7.1 million budget to keep the town operating. According to Hardaway, that represents \$33,000 for every man woman and child living in Enfield. "And that ought to be enough to pay for getting sewer lines to Plant Street," Hardaway contends.

"But the situation wasn't about the budget," Hardaway insists as he discusses the national media attention he attracted last month when he decided not to be stymied in his quest to bring indoor plumbing to Plant Street. The state agency's action may have compromised the town's sovereignty, but Hardaway has not thrown in the towel. He has other strategies in mind. If he couldn't use the budget as leverage, he figures he may have more success at the ballot box or in court.

There was a time when Hardaway thought he would get more help from the state's black leadership, particularly the NAACP.

"I think they can bring some pressure to the situation," Hardaway said.

The local NAACP asked the state chapter for assistance, but according to Hardaway, little has

been done. Despite what he considers a "clear cut case" the NAACP has not filed a lawsuit against officials in Enfield. "It doesn't sit well for me to advocate suing the town. I am the mayor," Hardaway observes. Still, he was hoping that the NAACP would intervene. "Injustices are being done to the residents here, and elected officials in Enfield must be held accountable." Elected officials in Enfield may not be the only folks responsible for the continued use of outdoor toilets in Halifax County. The federal Department of Agriculture gave the town a grant to build a waste water treatment plant in 1989. Service was extended to industry with a pledge to bring the lines to residences on Plant Street two years later. Two years have long since passed and the very homes that help secure the federal assistance are still lacking plumbing. The federal subsidy of tax-exempt bonds for the sewer system apparently was based on the area's poverty rate. "The commissioners take the statistics of people living here and get money, but they don't take that money and give relief to those who need and deserve it," accuses Hardaway, who also questions whether the USDA should have approved the grant. USDA officials did not return calls for comment this week.

When the civil rights champions didn't ride in like the calvary, demanding justice, Hardaway realized that he and his supporters would have to take matters into their own hands.

"What Kai has to understand, and what other people have to understand, is that the NAACP just can't do something tomorrow," says Melvin "Skip" Alston, president of the state NAACP.

On Sept. 2 Alston and Keith Sutton, the state NAACP executive director, visited Enfield. They held a press conference on the town hall steps before an audience of about 70 people. At that gathering, Sutton urged state and federal officials to investigate the town's policies toward black neighborhoods. Since then no official action has been taken, and Alston says it could be another month before a decision is made on what legal recourse is available.

"We have to get in contact with the national office and let them know what we're doing and get permission to go ahead and do that, because everything we do involves national also," Alston explains.

He says that officials at the state level have to be mindful of protocol.

"When we go out and file a friv-

olous lawsuit, that doesn't just jeopardize the state organization, it jeopardizes the organization nationally and then the town can come back and sue us for damages," Alston said. He added, "That's why we have to make sure that we dot every 'I' and cross every 'T.' And that's what our attorney is trying to do now. It does take time." To Hardaway, though, the situation in Enfield could hardly be considered frivolous. He says it would be easy to build a case. In another month, the lawsuit could be a moot point, however. Hardaway recognized this and isn't sitting around waiting for

the NAACP legal team to bring justice to his town. He and others are trying to change the composition of the Enfield commissioners. By replacing the individuals who have blocked the sewer extension, the problem may be resolved. The key now, says Hardaway, is getting the people who are eligible out to vote.

"We're going to be there on election day to get out the vote. Our chapters have been trying to get some voter registration down there, but we had a very tight, short time frame to do that. October 10 was the last day to register someone to vote in the election.

## Wardlow named Worshipful Master of the Year

Most Worshipful Grand Master Nathaniel Johnson presented a plaque to local man Albert Wardlow (pictured right), naming him North Carolina's Worshipful Master of the Year, at the 127th Communication of the North Carolina Prince Hall Grand Lodge held in the Research Triangle Park Sheraton Hotel Oct. 3.



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