

North Carolina Black Legislative Caucus host leadership summit

By DEIDRE JACKSON
CONSOLIDATED MEDIA GROUP

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK — Twenty years ago, only one elected black senator — now N.C. Chief Justice Henry Frye — roamed the halls of the General Assembly.

Times have changed. North Carolina's 24 black representatives — though still only a small fraction of the state's legislators — have forged themselves into a force to be reckoned with at the General Assembly.

Last weekend, they gathered to discuss economic development, voter registration and minority health issues during a two day conference hosted by the North Carolina Legislative Black Caucus. More than 700 attended the event who proceeds benefited a scholarship fund to aid the state's historically black colleges and universities.

"If we stand in these places and don't live up to our words, then we are not worth our salt," said Ben Ruffin, special assistant to Gov. Jim Hunt.



Womble Ruffin Everday
Voters join legislators for planning sessions

Ruffin's sentiments were echoed throughout the weekend as black legislators along with corporate and community leaders from around the state discussed the state of North Carolina's African Americans.

"We're trying to establish what the African American agenda is and to establish coalitions with other organizations to carry out that agenda," said Rep. Larry Womble who represents the 66th District which includes Winston-Salem. "We're here to come and celebrate our blackness. We're

proud African Americans and we've come to sit down and talk about issues that concern us."

Sen. Jeanne Lucas of Durham said she and other members of NCLBC use the association to "provide an overall comprehensive focus on issues that impact African Americans through the state."

"The we look at the issues affecting the General Assembly," she said.

Atlanta Mayor William "Bill"

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North Carolina NAACP taps minister to serve as exec director

By DAMON FORD
THE CHRONICLE

The North Carolina NAACP has named the Rev. George I. Allison to its top spot. Allison, a long-time member of the civil rights group, was named the state's executive director recently.

He becomes the third person since December to oversee the state's 116 NAACP chapters. His appointment followed the resignation of former state director Keith Sutton and the ousting of Greensboro businessman Hurley Derrickson, who held the job for less than a month.

"I'm looking to bring stability to the position and to the minds of the people, but also bringing it to the state level," Allison said. "(State executive director) is a much greater challenge than one I've had in the past, but it's one I welcome."

His first day at work running the day-to-day operations of North Carolina's oldest and largest civil rights group was May 26.

As state executive director, the 49-year old will serve as a resource person for local chapters and district directors. He will also plan conventions and conferences and must be aware of political decisions that effect minorities and ways to handle these decisions.

"We have a lot of confidence in him to do the job," said Melvin 'Skip' Alston, the NAACP state president. "He's very experienced. It's not like he has to be spoon-fed."

Allison has served as president of the Northern Orange County Chapter in Hillsborough for 10 years. May 31 was the his last day as pastor of Mount Bright Baptist Church after serving over 20 years in the community.

"I grew up being a part of NAACP as a child. My father kept my brother and me involved with the organization," Allison said.

"We do anticipate getting back to telling the story to young people about the struggle their parents went through so all will know where we came from," Allison said. "(They) are becoming idled in their own lives and have lost a sense of urgency because they do not know the struggle. Life is meant to be lived and enjoyed, but at the same time there is a struggle that you must know how to handle."

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Principal interest



Latham Elementary principal Larry Fields says he will continue to monitor ABCs plan.

Fields vows to continue to fight

By JERI YOUNG
THE CHRONICLE

Last week's decision by the U.S. Department of Office of Civil Rights won't stop a local principal from continuing his battle to change the controversial system the state uses to grade public educators.

Larry Fields, principal of Rowland H. Latham Elementary School, filed a complaint which alleged the ABCs of Public Education would discriminate against teachers, students and staff at his majority minority school last December.

In the ruling which was handed down last week, OCR ruled there was no evidence the program affects minority principals and/or teachers at low-performing schools disproportionately.

And while he admits he may have lost a battle, Fields says he will take "whatever action" necessary to ensure that "grading standards are fair."

"There is inequity in the system," he said. "ABC doesn't take everything into consideration that needs to be taken into consideration."

The ABCs plan, which was implemented by

the State Board of Education last year in elementary schools, is billed as a way to create a statewide standard course of study for children attending public schools.

As part of the program, students are tested in math, reading and writing at the end of each school year. Overall performance is based on student's "growth," the difference between what the student scores from one year to the next.

The program also mandates "proficiency standards" schools and students have to meet. Schools not meeting standard face stiff penalties that range from competency tests for teachers to removal of staff. In extreme cases the state could take over the daily running of a school or a system.

Students who fail to meet standards can be retained, which opponents of the program argue will increase the high-school drop out rate.

And that, says Fields, is the problem. The state's proficiency standards don't take into consideration the myriad problems that face schools

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WSSU faculty question Cone's leadership at Norfolk State

By SAM DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE

When Dr. Alvin J. Schexnider took office as the chancellor at Winston-Salem State nearly two years ago, he stated that he wanted to make the school a "student-centered university."

But faculty members at the institution say that Schexnider isn't practicing what he preaches. That's the reason they drafted a list of 33 issues for discussion that they recently presented to Schexnider. Many have also stated that they have a difficult time accepting the huge salary increases that he awarded the new vice chancellors that he has brought in since arriving at WSSU.

The salary increases helped broaden the gap between faculty and administrative salary. Some faculty members say they are concerned about the growing disparity and the direction in which the university is headed.

"He talks about the university being a 'student-centered university' but he isn't putting the resources where they need to go," one source said. "The faculty salary is considerably lower than that of their peers across the state. But the administrators he brought in are making more money than they did at their previous institutions."

The Chronicle made several efforts to reach Schexnider for comment, but calls to his office were not returned.

One administrator in particular has been mentioned by faculty members as an example of Schexnider's policy. Clementine Cone, the Vice Chancellor for Finances came into the university on July 1, 1997 with a salary of \$95,000. Her predecessor, Fred Burke, who had more than 20 years service to the university, retired with a salary of \$75,090.

That isn't the main source of contention among some faculty members. They look at the fact that Cone was named the chief financial officer at WSSU despite the fact that Norfolk State, her previous employer, is currently operating at a fiscal deficit of between \$4 and \$6.5 million.

"That is definitely alarming," said a faculty member who, did not want to be identified. "No one should take personal responsibility for that type of deficit, but you certainly can't remove the chief financial officer from having some sort of accountability."



Schexnider

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Challenges ahead for Sit-In Museum

By DAMON FORD
THE CHRONICLE

A Guilford County lawmaker is seeking a \$1 million allotment in the state budget for a Greensboro civil rights museum that would commemorate the sit-in movement.

Sen. Bill Martin (D-Guilford) introduced the legislation, but his colleagues already say its chances of passage are doubtful.

"There's just so much uncertainty about the money this year," said Sen. Bob Shaw (R-Guilford). "I don't think it's a government issue. (Museum supporters) have done very well with private fundraising and that's the way I think it should go."

Franklin McCain, one of the original "Greensboro Four" who are credited with jump starting the sit-in movement in the south, says the museum should go up because of what it represents.

"The museum is really international in scope. It's kind of a sign of hope," McCain said. "(All) of Greensboro should embrace it."

McArthur Davis, general manager for Sit-In

Movement, the museum's fundraising arm, said supporters have completed the first phase of the \$9.1 million project, by purchasing former Woolworth's store in downtown Greensboro where the first sit in was held for \$1.6 million.

Museum supporters now must raise \$7.5 million to complete the museum, which will include the lunch counter where the 1960 demonstration started, as well as a restaurant, a bookstore, an auditorium and classrooms.

"It's going to be very difficult venture," said Martin, who serves on the board of directors of Sit-In Movement. "But I thought I'd file (the bill) just in case, because you never know how things are going to turn out."

Martin said finding the money for the museum will be tough because the General Assembly faces difficult choices as it develops a budget for the 1998-1999 fiscal year, which begins in July.

McCain says African Americans should not let the project fall through because of monetary set-

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Photo by Wade Nash

Gate City's new chief

New City of Greensboro Police Chief Robert C. White is pinned by his wife Valarie White. White, who headed patrols for the Washington, D.C. police force, took the helm of the force Monday.