

Politicians gather for annual conference

By T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

The National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials held its summer conference here last week, amid the glitter of the National Black Theatre Festival.

More than 100 politicians from across the country met to discuss the 2000 census, charter schools, African/American relations and other wide-ranging issues.

Local NBC/LEO members

made a successful pitch to national officials to bring the conference to Winston-Salem. In the past the conference has been held in cities like Washington and Las Vegas. Local officials then persuaded the national board to move the conference - usually held in June or July - to August so that it would coincide with the theater festival.

The host committee, which was headed by Alderman Nelson Malloy and Alderwoman Joycelyn Johnson, even came up with a conference theme - "Community

Empowerment Through Arts and Education" - that enhanced the atmosphere that engulfed the city last week. Malloy also serves as NBC/LEO director for the state.

"This conference gives us a chance to network and communicate with our colleagues," Malloy said last week during the conference's opening reception. "This will benefit the constituents that we serve."

The host committee also came up with the numerous other topics NBC/LEO members discussed in

workshops. Malloy said topics were selected because of their relevance.

For instance, the topic of technology and African American youths was selected because many elected officials around the country have expressed concerns about how that population will fare as the country becomes more and more automated.

Charles Yancey, a Boston City Council member who has served

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Photo by T. Kevin Walker
NBC/LEO President Charles Yancey hugs Alderwoman Vivian Burke.

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It's Alive



Photo by Felicia McMillan



Photo by Jane Oulisan

Thousands packed the streets during the six-day festival. Top, actress Ja'Net DuBois talks with a pint-sized fan.

Festival jump-starts sluggish downtown

By T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

The cadence of the drums began last week, reverberating off long-vacant buildings, pumping life into a downtown that many think has been lifeless for years and acting as a beacon for the thousands who followed the infectious sounds.

The drums ushered in the National Black Theatre Festival, the nationally-renowned arts celebration that has made Winston-Salem the place to be for the past 10 years - at least for a week.

The beat served as a constant backdrop for the six-day festival. The beat went on while greetings and money were exchanged at the festival's vendors market; it continued on through the excitement of the nightly celebrity receptions at the Adam's Mark Hotel.

In the wee hours of Sunday morning, the beat died, as did the crowds and the jubilee. It all signaled the end of yet another theater festival. The 1999 festival took its final bow Saturday, leaving many city residents keeping their fingers crossed for an encore in 2001 and many out-of-towners hoping that festival officials will give their cities a look.

Though Winston-Salem was unrecognizable last week, things are beginning to look familiar again. But residents here say they will not soon forget the

events of last week. The good times, they say, will live on in the stories they will tell at work this week and in weeks to come, and in the countless images they captured with cameras and camcorders.

The beat went on (and on...)

It is not pictures of celebrities that Hashim Saleh has to remind him of the festival, nor is it an extensive collection of playbills from the dozens of productions that were staged.

Saleh, head of the Otesha Creative Dance and Music Ensemble, has two hands filled with white, puffy blisters that serve as painful, but pleasant, reminders of the festival.

Though not a billed part of the festival, Otesha's free nightly performances outside of the Adam's Mark probably incited more of a frenzy than that inside of the celebrity-packed hotel.

Thousands formed a huge circle around Otesha every night, clapping their hands and stomping their feet as the men of the group stroked African drums with precision and intensity and the Otesha women danced up a storm.

"It's a way of paying homage to our ancestors," Saleh said. "(The drums) are a unifying force for people. When drums are played, black people come together."



Photo by Bruce Chapman

See NBT on A11 Hashim Saleh leads a group of drummers.

Local charter school in battle to remain open

State board votes to begin process to revoke LIFT charter

By PAUL COLLINS
THE CHRONICLE

The State Board of Education voted 11-1 last week to begin the process to revoke the charter of LIFT Academy, a public charter school in Winston-Salem, because of financial problems. But the school is expected to appeal.

If that happens, school officials could appear before the state Charter School Advisory Committee on Aug. 20 to present their case.

Phil Kirk, chairman of the State Board of Education, said, that if LIFT Academy officials can convince the Charter School Advisory Committee that the school has its "finances in order and they will cooperate (with) requests for information in the future, I believe - I can't promise but I believe - that the state board will (not revoke LIFT's charter). It's not our intention to close schools."

"The school has some severe financial problems - a bad record of overdue federal taxes and a deficit the year before last," Kirk said. The audit has not been completed for last school year.

Officials from the State Department of Public Instruction said in previous interviews that:

• LIFT Academy did not pay \$33,861.40 in payroll taxes to the Internal Revenue Service for a period prior to LIFT Academy becoming a public charter school in 1997, and the IRS seized the \$33,861 from LIFT Academy's bank account in early 1999. (LIFT Academy was a private school before the

See LIFT on A12

City gets boost in revitalization

HUD awards \$4.5 million for neighborhood improvement

By JERI YOUNG
THE CHRONICLE

After more than 20 years of planning, local officials have finally received the financial boost they need to revitalize several communities in the northeastern and southeastern corridors of the city.

Flanked by representatives from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and members of the Board of Aldermen, Mayor Jack Cavanagh announced a \$4.5 million loan that will be used to finance two major projects that will change the face of downtown.

The bulk of the loan will be used to give long-overdue facelifts to six neighborhoods in the northeastern and southeastern areas of the city, including Lincoln-Maywood and Old Cherry neighborhoods, which border University Parkway. Located less than a mile from the heart of downtown, the historic neighborhoods have declined over the years.

Other neighborhoods slated to benefit from the loan include Andrews Height, a subdivision off New Walkertown Road; and Vulcan Quarry, a former rock quarry that will soon house a brand-new community of homeowners. LaDeara Crest Estates, an apartment complex in the 25th-Street area, will receive a portion of the loan. The package also includes development efforts for the area officials are



Burke

See HUD on A8