

SPORTS WEEK

Rams head to Pioneer Bowl

East weightroom to get facelift



See A2



See B1



See A8



See C1

COMMUNITY

Winston Lake honors volunteers

Chronicle solicits nominations

75 cents

WINSTON-SALEM GREENSBORO HIGH POINT

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THE CHRONICLE

1974 - Celebrating 25 Years - 1999

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Boom or bust



Photo by T. Kevin Walker

Jean Ingram, above, sets up a display in the window of her Trade Street clothing store. "There are some days when I come here and nothing happens," she said. Below, Audrey Easter straightens merchandise at her shop. Easter said she's able to pay the rent on her Trade Street shop but worries that business will dry up.

Downtown businesses in battle for survival

Following is the first of a three-part series that will look at issues facing black businesses on Trade Street and surrounding areas.

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

When Margaret and Angela Vigil decided to make the American dream of owning a business a reality, the mother and daughter duo set their sights on an unlikely location - downtown. The Vigils opened One of Kind Vintage Fashions more than two years ago in a section of Trade Street that's lined with swank art galleries, office buildings and a small number of other tiny, mostly black-owned, retail shops. Despite years of lofty promises of a resurrection, downtown, for the most part, remains a skeleton, its flesh torn away years ago by white flight to the suburbs and mall mania. Trade Street, however, is attempting a modest turn-around and is developing a reputation as the city's art district. But the Vigils and other small retailers want the lure of Trade to be more than sculptures and colorful abstracts. They stock their storefronts with their own kind of art: mannequins dressed to the nines in the best their boutiques have to offer. "I think (downtown) is the best place to be," Margaret Vigil said from her shop last week. "It's convenient. It's familiar... (and) I see Trade Street as booming right now. I think this area will come back

before the rest of downtown will." Margaret Vigil says she enjoys low rent at her city-owned building, and she benefits from the popular gallery hop events that regularly take place on Trade Street. But all is not peachy. In a city that's home to one of the largest malls in the Southeast, many downtown retailers say they are guppies trying to stay afloat with in a vast ocean of half-price and clearance sales. "Most people think downtown is dead, but we are not; we are here," said Angela Vigil, as she surveyed her surroundings outside of the shop. Audrey Easter, owner of Audrey's Boutique, says she is able to pay the rent, but would like to see more faces downtown and in her shop. Easter's small store, which she opened last September, is packed with sophisticated business ensembles, hats and intricate shawls and scarves. "I carry sizes 6 through 24," she said proudly. Easter says she has slow days and brisk ones. She has found that in order to increase traffic in her boutique, she has to promote herself vigorously and educate those who think that all downtown has to offer is boarded-up storefronts and tattered sidewalks. In the past, Easter, the Vigils and other shop owners have printed and distributed fliers to promote their goods. During the National Black Theatre Festival, they set up free refreshment stands in front of their shops. Jean Ingram has had colorful pens

with the name and telephone number of Center, at the corner of Trade and Sixth



her shop - Turning Heads Boutique - printed on them. She often passes out business cards when she is at social outings and even slips handmade handkerchiefs into customers' bags so that they will always remember her quaint shop, which is located in the WC Publishing Business streets. "There are some days I come here and nothing happens," said Ingram, who had 30 years of retail experience under her belt before launching her own business last

See Business on A4



Photo by T. Kevin Walker

Imam Khalid Griggs reads a proclamation issued by the Black Leadership Roundtable decrying the demotion of three black police officers.

BLR decries demotions

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Calling the demotions of three African American police officers "excessive," members of the Black Leadership Roundtable threw their weight behind former sergeants Steve Hairston, Victor Robinson and Chuck Byrom and vowed to use any means necessary to ensure that their stripes, good names and reputations are returned. "The Black Leadership Roundtable calls upon City Manager Bill Stuart to undo the grievous injustice done against officers Hairston, Robinson and Byrom and begin the process to restore them to their original rank and restore any lost wages that resulted from the demotions," Imam Khalid Griggs, co-convenor of BLR, read from a prepared statement. The group says that if Stuart is "unwilling or incapable" of overturning the promotions, it would like the city to establish an independent grievance officer to rectify the situation. Griggs, BLR Convener Larry Womble, Alderman Nelson Malloy and others announced publicly their displeasure with Police Chief Linda Davis' decision to demote the officers during a news conference last week in front of Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum, the site of a much-talked rap concert that cost the officers their ranks. The Aug. 28 concert, which featured multiple rap artists, including Luther Campbell of 2 Live Crew fame, was marred by fights among concert-goers and an alleged on-stage sex act during Campbell's set. Complaints from citizens and Alderman Fred Terry, whose teenage son attended the concert, led to an investigation by the city manager's office. The office made its report public last month; it concluded that many factors led to the free-for-all atmosphere at the concert, including lax supervision by nine off-duty police officers who were hired to work security at the event. The officers were part of a security force that included non-police security guards and ushers. But the three sergeants, the highest ranking officers at the concert, were the only ones demoted. Members of the Board of Aldermen criticized Stuart at a public-safety meeting last month for not

See Demotions on A9