

BUSINESS FOCUS

Briefs

Boycott supporters get boost from church group

CINCINNATI (AP) - Supporters of the economic boycott of Cincinnati received a major boost to their efforts when a national black church group canceled plans to hold its annual meeting in the city this summer.

Leaders of the Progressive National Baptist Convention said Saturday that the black church group will hold its 10,000 member session in another city to be announced later.

"It's unfortunate, but there just is no indication the city is serious about addressing the issues of racial justice this city faces," said the Rev. Otis Moss, a member of the church's executive committee.

The call for a boycott began after riots broke out in April when a white police officer fatally shot an unarmed black man who was fleeing police on traffic charges and on charges that he had run from police before.

"They have seen firsthand that the city hasn't been willing to make substantive change and they don't want to bring people here to be exposed to this kind of climate," the Rev. Damon Lynch III said Saturday.

Lynch is president of the Cincinnati Black United Front, one of the two main groups pushing the boycott.

City officials had expected the weeklong convention to bring millions of dollars to city businesses, and Mayor Charlie Luken said the city did everything it could to persuade the group to keep the meeting in Cincinnati.

In a statement released Saturday night, Progressive National Baptist leaders said they will consider a return to Cincinnati "if the hostile racial climate in Cincinnati is resolved and economic parity for the African-American community is attained."

The church group, which had earlier indicated that it would hold the convention as planned, was the latest in a growing number of groups and individuals choosing to honor the boycott.

Earlier, entertainers Bill Cosby, Wynton Marsalis, the O'Jays and the Temptations canceled performances. Those cancellations led the Cincinnati Arts Association last month to threaten a lawsuit against the Coalition for a Just Cincinnati, another major advocate of the boycott.

E-procurement session to be held

RALEIGH - A special e-procurement training session has been planned especially for you if you own a business, and you are a minority, woman or a person with a disability, and you would like to compete for contracting opportunities with the state of North Carolina.

Representatives from such businesses, designated as historically underutilized businesses or HUBs, are invited to attend a HUB e-procurement training session in Winston-Salem on Monday, March 25. The training is sponsored by the Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses in the N.C. Department of Administration.

Sessions are intended to raise awareness of the state's new e-procurement system, explain how the e-procurement process works, educate the HUB vendor community on the importance of utilizing the new e-procurement system, and register new vendors in the e-procurement and e-quote systems. The HUB vendors in the Triad are being targeted for this training session.

The training session, one of seven to be held statewide, is scheduled from 9 a.m. to noon in the Mazie Woodruff Center Building on the campus of Forsyth Technical Community College, 4905 Lansing Drive, Winston-Salem. To register online, complete the HUB Office's electronic registration material at www.doa.state.nc.us/hub. Pre-registration is recommended.

"This training session will provide a better understanding for HUB vendors interested in utilizing the e-procurement and e-quote system," according to Bridget Wall, assistant to the secretary for HUB outreach. "The session will educate HUB vendors on the benefits of the new procurement system. In addition, on-site registration will be available to new vendors in an effort to increase their opportunities with the state. As a result of more HUB vendors registering through the e-procurement system, purchasing officials, construction project managers and general contractors will be able to identify and have better access to HUB vendors."

BB&T appoints new auditor

BB&T Corp. yesterday named PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP as its independent auditor for 2002. The decision by BB&T's board of directors to change auditors follows last week's indictment of Arthur Andersen LLP by a federal grand jury. Andersen had been BB&T's auditor since 1966.

BB&T reappointed Andersen at its January board meeting after a careful evaluation and thorough review of the team assigned to BB&T. However, at the time of that decision, BB&T said it would continue to follow the Enron situation as well as monitor Andersen's status and reputation and would reconsider its reappointment if new developments called for a change.

Scott E. Reed, BB&T's chief financial officer, said, "Our earlier decision to retain Andersen was based on the performance and professionalism of those Andersen employees who have worked with us through the years.... Obviously, this latest development necessitates that we reconsider our previous decision. We have to do what we believe is best for our shareholders and our company. PricewaterhouseCoopers is a highly respected firm with substantial expertise in the financial services industry...."

New Gig



Weatherproof Garment Co. has signed "Today Show" weatherman Al Roker to appear in a series of print advertisements under the tagline "I'm weatherproofed." The ads will appear in major newspapers, magazines, and in select outdoor advertising beginning this month.

Procter & Gamble Fund pledges \$1 million

Campaign strives to strengthen technology capabilities at black universities

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

CINCINNATI - Continuing its longtime support of black higher education, The Procter & Gamble Fund has pledged \$1 million to United Negro College Fund's Technology Enhancement Capital Campaign (TECC), a multimillion dollar initiative to strengthen technology capabilities at UNCF member colleges and universities.

John Pepper, chairman of the board at Procter & Gamble and P&G Fund trustee, described the company's commitment to TECC as an investment with great potential for tremendous return.

"The College Fund has a tremendous track record of turning corporate dollars into tangible benefits for UNCF scholars," Pepper said. "Identifying problems, developing solutions and implementing change are hallmarks for UNCF, which makes it a pleasure for P&G to support the College Fund anyway we can."

Through the TECC initiative, technology platforms at the 39 UNCF schools will be revamped and modernized, and all students, faculty and staff will have greater access to the latest in computer technology and online services. UNCF developed the initiative to address the "digital divide" between predominantly white colleges and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

Pepper, who also serves on the UNCF board of directors, added that the increasing reliance on technology in nearly every aspect of daily life magnifies the significance of the TECC initiative.

"Technology, like many of the products produced by P&G, can help improve lives every day, but must be widely accessible," Pepper said. "We're confident that this UNCF initiative will make that possible for thousands of deserving students."

With a goal of \$80 million, the UNCF TECC campaign is well on its way to success. Nearly \$70 million has been raised so far, according to UNCF President and CEO William H. Gray III.

See Procter on A9

Black Entertainment Television moving from Harlem to midtown

BY LARRY MCSHANE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK - Two years after arriving in Harlem with great fanfare, Black Entertainment Television announced it was swapping its uptown digs for a midtown address - much to the chagrin of African-American business and political leaders.

"We were disappointed about the news," Terry Lane, chief executive of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, said Thursday. "Given the culturally specific programming that BET does, it seemed logical that Harlem would be its home."

Instead, the black-oriented network was relocating to the CBS Broadcast Center on West 57th Street after breaking off negotiations for a bigger space about 20 blocks north of its current Harlem location.

Both CBS and BET are owned by Viacom, which purchased Black Entertainment Television in November 2000 for nearly \$3 billion.

"Harlem had a great pride in its selection by BET," said U.S.



Debra Lee

Rep. Charles Rangel, whose district includes the neighborhood. "There's no question that we, more than CBS or downtown, exemplify what the station is supposed to stand for."

City officials were in talks with BET to anchor its Gotham Plaza project at 125th Street and Lexington Avenue. The new location would have included a street-level studio similar to those of NBC in Rockefeller

Center or ABC in Times Square and expanded on the current space at 106th Street and Park Avenue.

"I thought it was a done deal," Rangel said of that plan. "We did all the celebrating as though it had happened."

But Lane said officials at the empowerment zone - which had helped lure BET uptown two years ago with a variety of tax breaks - discovered the network was breaking off talks through a news release.

BET had initially moved to Harlem several months before the Viacom purchase.

Attempts to reach BET officials about resuscitating the Harlem plan were unsuccessful, both Lane and Rangel said. A BET spokesman did not return calls for comment.

In a statement, BET president and chief operating officer Debra Lee said the network would "continue to look for programming opportunities in Harlem when feasible."

The network also will "remain open to the possibility of office space and production facil-



Rangel

ities in Harlem should our future business needs dictate additional expansion," Lee said. No timetable for the move downtown was announced.

The network said its move was necessary to find more space for its news and music programs. That did little to assuage the hard feelings of supporters of the abandoned Harlem studio.

"We are," Rangel said, "terribly disappointed."