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# THE CHRONICLE

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## Lots of faith, little time

*Family of man convicted of 1994 city murder wants his sentenced commuted*

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

Eleanor Lyons' son may be dead by the time many people read this article.

Robbie Lyons is scheduled to die by lethal injection at 2 a.m. tomorrow at Raleigh's Central Prison, which he has called home since 1994. Robbie Lyons was convicted of shooting store owner Stephen Wilson Stafford to death. The murder, which occurred during a robbery, happened in Winston-Salem and stood out because Robbie Lyons, a New Jersey native, was accidentally released from jail for another offense shortly before the murder.

Eleanor Lyons, her two other sons and other family members were in Winston-

Salem Monday for a rally that not only pushed for a stay of execution for Lyons but a two-year halt of capital punishment in North Carolina.

"I am hopeful, but very stressed," Eleanor Lyons said when asked about her feelings about the looming deadline for her son. The Lyons family and a bevy of death penalty opponents say that the death penalty never should have been sought in the case because they claim Stafford's murder was not premeditated. The Lyonses say they are not looking for Robbie Lyons' sentence to be overturned. They say they will be satisfied if he has to spend the rest of his life behind bars. They just don't want him put to death.

The Lyons case has become



Photo by Kevin Walker

See Rally on A11 Eleanor Lyons, left, is comforted by friend Dolores Walker before Monday's rally.

## Locals address AIDS problem

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

World AIDS Day was marked around the globe Dec. 1 by millions of people.

In South Africa big-name music stars performed a sell-out concert to raise money and awareness. In Kenya tens of thousands of activists protested for more affordable AIDS drugs. In England, Prime Minister Tony Blair



Roth

took to the airways to reiterate his nation's commitment to battling HIV/AIDS, which about 42 million people around the world are believed to be infected with.

Here in the city, a solemn ceremony at Centenary United Methodist Church was one of several events held locally to commemorate World AIDS Day. About 40 people attended the ecumenical service, where they sang hymns, prayed and heard from people living with the disease.

James Grissom, resident manager at AIDS Care Ser-

See AIDS on A10



Photo by Bruce Chapman

Arthur Ford's house on Rundell Street has illuminated his neighborhood for several years.

## 'Lights man' keeps up tradition

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD  
THE CHRONICLE

Arthur Ford's house on Rundell Street has been bedazzling neighbors with his Christmas light show for more than a decade now. Even some drivers within a four-block radius can see the display on a hill, due to the thousands of lights on his home, yard and garage. Like clockwork every year, the luminous spectacle begins the day after Thanksgiving and this year was no different.

"It's something to see," said Ford. "You have to see it at night."

The process of hanging all the lights and securing them into place is no small feat. Ford began setting up the lights back in October and

says it takes about five to six weeks. Last year's ice storm, said Ford, pulled many of the lights down. He estimates that it adds a few extra hundred dollars to his light bill during the months of December and January.

"You spend close to \$200 a year - that's not much - and maybe a couple thousand dollars in 10 years," said Ford, who turns the lights on at dusk and leaves them on until morning so that people working the late shift can catch a glimpse of the display on their way home.

Giant angels made out of plywood, ornaments made out of wire, moons and stars hang in his backyard trees. A snowman sits atop his garage, and lights illuminate trees around the entire property. His favorite display is a tree in

See Ford on A11



Photos by Courtney Gaillard

Right: Arthur Ford does not buy most of his decorations from retail stores. He makes many instead. Here he uses chicken wire to create one of his ornaments. Left: Ford checks a row of lights above his garage to make sure they are working correctly.



## Historian among award winners

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Effley Howell of Kernersville was one of three North Carolinians who recently received the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation's Nancy Susan Reynolds Award. The award, in its 18th year, is also referred to as the "North Carolina's Nobel Prizes" because it recognizes

unsung leaders for their contributions to improving the state.

The award, established in 1986, is named for one of the founders of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. Reynolds has been described as "the most remarkable woman of widely diversified philanthropy in 20th century America."

See Awards on A5



Howell



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