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# THE CHRONICLE

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THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2004

## Brick by Brick

*Liberty Street Community Development Corp.  
moving forward with plans to revitalize area*

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

Banners have started to go up on light poles along Liberty Street. They read, "Redeveloping Liberty Street, one brick at a time," and more than 40 of them will decorate the Liberty Street Corridor, the stretch of road that connects Smith Reynolds Airport and downtown.

The newly-reshuffled Liberty Street Community Development Corp. hopes that the banners are a sign to the community that Liberty Street is in the midst of a comeback - an attempt to bring back its heyday when successful businesses lined the street and people took pride in their homes and properties.

Jim Shaw remembers that heyday well. He once owned a gas station on the street. Today, he is the chairman of the Liberty CDC board and is leading the drive to beau-

tify the street and attract new tenants and investors.

The CDC has already begun to build coalitions with businesses and residents in the Liberty Street area. They are asking people to work to bring their properties up to standard and to help fight drugs, prostitution and other problems by working with law enforcement.

The CDC is also looking to the city to meet the people half way. The city already offers matching grants up to \$20,000 for renovations to property owners along Liberty Street.

The city has also created some attractive brick sidewalks along the street. Assistant City Manager Derwick Paige said that more improvements are in the works, including new sidewalks, street lights and trash cans.

But promises by the city to do something about Liberty - which has fallen into great



Paige



City worker Darryl Webb installs the banners.

See Liberty on A9

## Leaders take up concerns of moms

*DSS is forced to cut some child care*

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

About 250 mothers this week were thrown into limbo when the subsidy they receive from the Forsyth County Department of Social Services was abruptly cut. The cut affects only parents who are enrolled in post-secondary education. DSS had provided the parents with \$320 a month per child to help cover child care so that the parents could attend school. But the agency's well ran dry last month when DSS got only a quarter of the money it needed from the state to continue the subsidy.

Several members of the Ministers Conference and Black Leadership Roundtable met with some of the mothers affected by the cut. Rep. Larry Womble, a leader in the roundtable, said the group is concerned about the fate of the mothers and their children.

"The parents and the children are caught in the middle of this through no fault of their own," he said.

Some of the parents have found emergency help from Smart Start and Northwest Child Development. Brenda Evans, the assistant director of Forsyth County DSS, said Forsyth Technical Community College - where many of the affected mothers are enrolled - is also working to find child-care solutions. In some cases, day care centers are working with the parents

See DSS on A4



Marshall

## Blacks: DOT has a racism problem

BY GARY D. ROBERTSON  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**RALEIGH** - The Department of Transportation often has been labeled the biggest good-old boy network within state government.

Conflict-of-interest scandals in the late 1990s prompted lawmakers to reform the state's Board of Transportation. And a series of discrimination lawsuits

spurred efforts to improve minority hiring practices and to give more road contracts to black-led



Tippet

businesses. But seven black DOT employees who have a pending suit against the department for civil rights violations say efforts to reform have fallen short and that there needs to be a major housecleaning within the agency.

"DOT is full of racism," said James Mitchell, one of the seven workers from a Raleigh maintenance shop who have sued. "It's time for a change."

The plaintiffs and their attorney first sued in late 2002, after they say a hangman's noose was displayed in the maintenance shop throughout Black History Month that year.

The noose symbolized lynching and the Ku Klux Klan, they say, and they bring a large photograph of the rope to their news conferences.

See DOT on A10

## Paying the Piper



Photo courtesy of Office of Mel Watt

Last week Rep. Mel Watt gave Krispy Kreme doughnuts and North Carolina peanuts to colleague Rep. Martin Meehan of Massachusetts. Watt was on the losing end of a bet the two made on the recent Super Bowl. Both Meehan and Watt traveled to Houston to see their beloved teams face off on Feb. 1, where the New England Patriots narrowly prevailed over the Carolina Panthers 31-28. Meehan had bet pizza, calzones and New England wine.

## Men robbed by justice speak out

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

**GREENSBORO** - Ronald Cotton remembers the day in 1984 when he learned that cops were looking for a black man who broke into the house of a white woman and raped her. He saw a sketch of the black suspect in the newspaper and immediately knew that in Alamance County the rapist would be dealt with swiftly and severely.

"Me and my brother saw a sketch in the paper of the suspect and told (my brother), 'I don't know who this guy is, but when they find him he is gone.'"

In a twist of irony that would even be considered far-fetched for a Hollywood whodunit, police came knocking

at Cotton's door, asking him questions about the crime. Once the victim, Jennifer Thompson, identified Cotton as the man who raped her, Cotton found himself in jail. A jury would convict him based largely on the testimony of Thompson, who said in court that the face of her rapist was a face that she could never forget.

Cotton was nearly 11 years into his 43-year prison sentence when he learned about DNA testing through the publicity from the O.J. Simpson trial. Cotton eventually got his DNA tests. Thompson had been wrong, as had the prosecutors and police investigators that pursued Cotton so doggedly.

Saturday, Cotton, who was

See Forum on A4



Photo by Kevin Walker

Ronald Cotton, who was wrongfully convicted of rape in the 1980s, talks to audience members after a forum Saturday at Bennett College for Women.



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