

# ARTS & LIFESTYLE

## Of Interest ...

### BET Awards lineup grows

The lineup is growing for BET Awards, which will air live at the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood on June 29 at 8 p.m.

Songbird Alicia Keys, rapper Ludacris and hot new producer/rapper Kanye West will join music superstars Janet Jackson, Usher, Outkast and The Isley Brothers, who are also slated to burn up the stage with red-hot performances. Other new additions to the lineup include hip-hop crew 50 Cent and the G Unit, and gospel music sensation Smokie Norful.

Celebrities confirmed to appear or present awards include Jamie Foxx, Jada Pinkett Smith, Steve Harvey, Gabrielle Union, Boris Kodjoe, Raven, Dorien Wilson, Twista and Humanitarian Award recipient Danny Glover.

The BET Awards recognize the biggest and the best in film, music and sports personalities. Topping the list of nominees are R&B's hottest leading lady, Beyonce; Dirty South luminaries Outkast and Lil Jon; R&B superstar Usher; hip-hop kingpin Jay-Z; and newcomer Kanye West.

Reprising her role as the first-ever female host of the BET Awards telecast is Mo'Nique, star of the UPN Network's "The Parkers."

### Sawtooth plans opening

The Sawtooth Center for Visual Art is hosting the initial showing of 60 8x10 photographs taken by local veterans during their tours in Vietnam. The exhibit, which will be in the Milton Rhodes Gallery of the Sawtooth Building, will begin with an opening night reception on Thursday, July 1, at 6 p.m.

The N.C. chapter of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association will display a Huey helicopter in the First Presbyterian Church parking lot across from the Sawtooth Building from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

### Lil' Kim blocked from leaving U.S.

**NEW YORK (AP)** — A federal judge Friday blocked rapper Lil' Kim from performing at a music festival on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts later this month.

The performer, whose real name is Kimberly Jones, is barred from leaving the United States as part of a bail agreement in a shooting case.

Judge Gerard Lynch scolded Jones — "known for her revealing outfits and risqué lyrics — for having agreed in May to perform at the St. Kitts Music Festival. She had surrendered her passport in April after she was charged with lying to a grand jury about a 2001 shootout between rival rap groups at a New York hip-hop radio station.

Lawyer Mel Sachs argued Jones was not a flight risk: "Your honor, this is a well-known performer," he said.

"Tell that to Roman Polanski," the judge replied, referring to the Oscar-winning director who fled the United States after he was charged in 1977 with having sex with a 13-year-old girl.

"Just because you're a celebrity doesn't mean you don't jump bail and leave the country."

The rapper wore a tan pantsuit to the hearing; her hair was streaked in red-orange hues. She sat with her hands folded in her lap and did not speak.

Lil' Kim, who won a Grammy Award for her part in the hit remake of "Lady Marmalade" in 2001, was to perform at the music festival June 26 along with Ginuwine and Busta Rhymes. Sachs told reporters she would have been paid \$35,000, and now will have to pay an undetermined penalty calculated by concert organizations.

### Museum will offer camps

Reynolda House, Museum of American Art is offering a series of classes for children in the areas of art and creative writing during the months of June and July. Summer Enrichment takes place during the weeks of June 28-July 2 and July 5-9 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Rising first- through sixth-grade boys and girls look at and learn about selected pieces of art in the Reynolda House collection and then create their own art through a series of fun hands-on activities. Linda Grimes, a public school art teacher and 10-year veteran of the Summer Enrichment program, leads these sessions.

"Writing Adventures" has these sessions this summer: June 28-July 2 and July 5-9 from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. followed by both morning and afternoon sessions during the week of July 12-16. As in the Summer Enrichment programs, the children relate their creative writing projects to art they have looked at and discussed. Becky Brown will lead the first two sessions; Tracy Wilson will lead the last week. Reynolda House is fortunate to have these two accomplished teachers leading the summer writing sessions for children.

Each camp's daily activities include a snack and a swim in the beautiful indoor Reynolda House pool. For information and to register children for Summer Enrichment or Writing Adventures, call 758-5389. Fees vary according to the session, ranging from \$75 to \$90 with discounts for siblings.



Usher is the hottest name in popular music these days.

## Hometown folks say Usher has forgot roots

BY BARRY COURTER  
CHAATANOOGA TIMES-FREE PRESS

**CHAATANOOGA, TENN.** (NNPA) — Darryl Wheeler Sr. glances over the May issue of Vibe magazine with R&B star Usher on the cover and reads again the quotes in the story from the superstar. "Because of his language, I don't know that young man," he says of the Chattanooga-born artist who has America's No. 1 record. "That's not the same young man that lived with me and called me dad."

Wheeler, who says he signed the star to this first recording contract, wonders out loud about the changes that Usher Raymond IV has gone through since he first approached him in 1990, as a 12-year-old Dalewood Middle School student who wanted to perform with Wheeler's boy band, Nu Beginning.

Today, Usher, 26, has the top-selling album, "Confessions," and two singles in the Top 5 Billboard music charts, "Yeah" and "Burn." His photograph is also on the cover of this month's Rolling Stone magazine. Yet, Wheeler and former members of Nu Beginning say that the R&B superstar apparently doesn't acknowledge the group he spent nearly three years with when given the chance in national interviews.

"He (Usher) is not a superstar to me," Wheeler says. "He's still the young man that lived in my house and slept in the same room with my son and ate at my table. I just want to know why he doesn't acknowledge us or the family that was the Nu Beginning."

In the Rolling Stone article, Usher alludes to his days here and Wheeler indirectly. He also talks about the days after he moved to Atlanta with his

mother, Jonetta Patton.

Wheeler said that after seeing a recent television special on Usher that contained no mention of Nu Beginning, he decided to tell his story in a documentary titled "When Dreams Are Shattered," produced by In UR Eye Media in Florida. It is slated for release in June under the imprint of Wheeler's company, Comclean Entertainment, and is being shopped to various music, film and television companies.

Usher's mother did not respond to faxed questions and phone calls seeking comment on the documentary.

She and Usher have said in previous interviews that she had moved her son to Atlanta to be nearer the musical big leagues. As for the star himself, Usher's publicist, Simone Smalls, says, "Usher is not available for any

See Usher on C8

## Gibbs joins cast of 'Passions'

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

**STUDIO CITY, Calif.** — Eight-time NAACP Image Award winner Marla Gibbs has joined the cast of "Passions" in the role of Irma Johnson, "Aunt Irma," Executive Producer Lisa de Cazotte announced recently.

Marla Gibbs is a Chicago native. It was a job transfer as a United Airlines reservation clerk that led an adult Gibbs and her three children from Detroit to Los Angeles.

Gibbs soon joined PASLA (Performing Arts Society of Los Angeles) with her daughter Angela and studied at the Mafundi Institute and Watts Writers Workshop (both in Watts). Gibbs soon performed in several well-received productions, including "Medea," "Amen Corner" and "The Gingerbread Lady" at the Zodiac Theatre.

After a few bit parts, Gibbs landed the plum role of Florence on "The Jeffersons," where she

gained international notoriety. After the ninth successful season of "The Jeffersons," Gibbs landed a spin-off series, "Checking-In," which was interrupted by a writers strike and never recovered, and she returned to "The Jeffersons."

Soon after, daughter Angela produced the award winning Christine Houston play "227," in which Gibbs was cast as the lead by noted director Ed Cambridge. The play was such a smashing success that Gibbs purchased the TV rights and, along with Norman Lear's Embassy TV, sold and helped produce the series for NBC where it became a five-year hit series, now in syndication.

Gibbs is a four-time Emmy nominee, eight-time Family TV Award winner, Essence Woman of the Year, Frances Williams' Women in Theater West Award

winner, Special Black Emmy nominee honoree, winner of two CEBA Awards and has received a host of other national and local honors.

In 2000, she received a Best Supporting Actress award from The Southern California Method Fest. She recently completed starring in the feature films "Stanley's Gig" and "The Visit."

Other recent film credits include "The Brothers," "Foolish," "Lost and Found," "Why Do Fools Fall in Love," "Border to Border" and "Up Against the Wall." She recently participated in Eve Ensler's play "The Vagina Monologues" in New York City.

Gibbs' first air date on "Passion" was June 14, which was also her birthday.



Gibbs



Rev. Al Sharpton was once a Democratic contender.

BY SHENISHE L. KELLY  
NNPA INTERN

**WASHINGTON** — Al Sharpton, who often outshined his opponents and entertained the nation during his short-lived presidential candidacy, will now use his insight and quick wit as a CNBC political commentator during this summer's political conventions.

"I will be speaking as a person that comes from an African-American background, which most commentators don't, that will see these conventions and what they do and do not do for black communities as well as Latinos and others that have been left out," said Sharpton.

Beginning in July, Sharpton will appear on various CNBC shows twice a week and then nightly during

## Writer Ralph Wiley dies at 52

FROM NNPA

**WASHINGTON** — Ralph Wiley, an outspoken former staff writer for Sports Illustrated and ESPN — the television network, Web site and magazine, died the night of June 13 at his home in Orlando of heart failure. He was 52 years old.

Wiley, a 1975 graduate of Knoxville College in Tennessee,

died three weeks after the death of a fellow alumnus and colleague, Vernon Jarrett. A former president of the National Association of Black Journalists, Jarrett died on May 23 in Chicago at the age of 86.

"Knoxville College is noted for producing nationally-recognized African-American journalists," said Barbara R. Hatton, president of Knoxville College in Tennessee. "And to have two giants in the field of journalism die within three weeks of each other is a blow to the profession and brings deep sorrow to our Knoxville College family."

Johnathan Rodgers, now president and CEO of TV One network, was the first black to work as a reporter at Sports Illustrated in the late 1960s. He was followed at SI by George E. Curry (Knoxville College, '70), now editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service, in the early 1970s. Wiley began writing for Sports Illustrated in 1982 and remained there for 10 years, producing 28 cover stories. He had been a regular on ESPN's "Sports Reporters," had provided commentary for ESPN's "SportsCenter" and had worked as an NFL analyst for NBC.

At Knoxville College, the Memphis native played wide receiver on the football team and obtained his first professional journalism job, writing sports for the Knoxville Keyana-Spectrum, a weekly. After his student days at Knoxville College, Wiley began as a copy clerk for the Oakland Tribune but quickly got a staff job and was writing a regular column when Sports Illustrated hired him in 1982.

Reflecting on his lonely stint at Sports Illustrated, Wiley said it was not easy.

"I often thought of myself as the Larry Bird of Sports Illustrated during the 10 years I wrote articles there," he said in a column. "...Not counting public sentiment, I know the

See Wiley on C8

## Sharpton is CNBC's newest commentator

the Democratic convention in Boston July 26-29 and the Republican convention in New York Aug. 30 through Sept. 2.

Among his scheduled appearances are the "Dennis Miller Show," "Capitol Report" and the new "McEnroe" shows.

Sharpton, who joined the Kerry campaign as an adviser last week, will have direct access to Democratic discussions and strategies and may help CNBC battle conservative competitors.

"It is probably one of their considerations and if it is, I am proud to try to help them do that," Sharpton said, referring to the right-wing competition. "I absolutely feel this is an opportunity to give the opposite view

See Sharpton on C8