

BUSINESS FOCUS

Briefs

Black Voices names editor

America Online Inc. has named Nicholas Charles editor in chief of AOL Black Voices.

In this new role, Charles will be responsible for spearheading the day-to-day editorial activities across all content areas, including news, sports, lifestyle, entertainment, finance, education and community. He will report to the newly named vice president and general manager, Janet Rollé.

"We are excited to have Nicholas join AOL Black Voices and are confident that through his far-reaching editorial experience — having covered news, culture, lifestyle, business, sports, politics and entertainment for diverse publications — he will significantly contribute to the growth of the AOL Black Voices brand," Rollé said.

Most recently, Charles was the founding editor in chief of the Toyota and Jungle Media Group culture/lifestyle magazine, Forward, responsible for the conceptualization and design of the 60-page title. Before that, he was a staff writer for the New York Daily News, writing feature articles and cultural criticism, plus a weekly column on pop culture. In addition, he served as a human interest and features writer for People magazine.

Charles holds a B.A. degree in journalism from New York University.

Head of NASA center named president of Alabama A&M

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (AP) — Julian Earls, the director of NASA's Glenn Research Center in Cleveland, was named president of Alabama A&M University on Friday.

Trustees unanimously selected Earls over two other candidates to head the historically black school.

Earls was the first member of his family to attend college. In his interview last Thursday, he compared A&M with his undergraduate experience in the early 1960s at Norfolk State University in Virginia, also a historically black school.

"Had there been no Norfolk State, I would not have gone to college," Earls said.

Earls, who will be the 10th president of the 130-year-old school, replaces John Gibson, who resigned under pressure in February.

Earls was appointed director of the Glenn Research Center two years ago. He managed a yearly budget of about \$773 million and oversaw a work force of about 3,200 government employees and contractors.

Robert Jennings, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Future Focus 2020, an academic center at the Babcock Graduate School of Management at Wake Forest University, had been one of three finalists for the job.



Earls

Durham company selected to develop downtown site

The Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership announced Tuesday that Niemann Capital, LLC of Durham has been named the preferred developer for Civic Plaza, a 3.2-acre site in downtown Winston-Salem.

The company was selected after a solicitation of interest was issued in June to more than 160 potential developers nationwide. Niemann will now enter into the first of two roughly 60-day periods during which it will meet with key property owners, elected officials and community stakeholders and begin to develop its master plan for the site.

The project consists of three sites: a large block of properties owned by the Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership Foundation, Piedmont Federal Savings & Loan Association and the city of Winston-Salem; a smaller block containing the former Forsyth County Courthouse, which is still owned by Forsyth County; and an adjacent open space also owned by the city called Liberty Plaza, which is in front of the Liberty Plaza Building at Liberty and Third streets.

The development opportunity is based on the recommendations in the Civic Plaza Urban Design Guidelines prepared by Sasaki Associates Inc. in 2003. The study called for a mix of retail, office, residential, parking, and public green space. The entire project has been estimated to have a value between \$100 million and \$150 million.

The Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership anticipates that this predominantly residential development will become the centerpiece of a completely revitalized downtown that has been evolving aggressively over the past several years.

Niemann will spend the next two months collecting information as to what the community believes will best serve the needs of Winston-Salem.

Sara Lee acquires company

Sara Lee Branded Apparel announced this week that it has acquired National Textiles, L.L.C., a yarn and textile production company based in Winston-Salem. The company also said that it recently acquired DFK Trading Corporation Ltd., an Asian sourcing company.

Both transactions are part of the company's long-term strategies to ensure a highly effective global supply chain. Terms of the transactions were not disclosed.

With vertical yarn-to-textile operations, National Textiles is a major supplier of open-end and ring-spun cotton as well as blended yarns and finished tubular fabrics. National Textiles has plants in Rabun Gap, Ga.; Mountain City, Tenn.; Galax, Va.; and Forest City, Ga. Distribution and warehousing are located in Advance, N.C. The company employs approximately 2,900 people.

Separately, newly acquired DFK Trading Corporation Ltd. will operate as DFK International Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sara Lee Branded Apparel. Based in Hong Kong, DFK will source raw materials in the emerging Asian market.



AP Photo by Bill Haber

Kathleen Rhodes Astorga, one of the owners of Rhodes Funeral Home, stands in front of one of their funeral homes in Baton Rouge.

Funeral home fears its own demise

Family-owned business has been in Louisiana since late 1800s

BY BRAD FOSS
AP BUSINESS WRITER

BATON ROUGE, La. — For 116 years, it has been the job of Kathleen Rhodes Astorga's family to provide comfort and studied composure. But in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, that steadiness is being shaken.

"This is not an easy time," said Rhodes Astorga, whose family runs one of New Orleans' oldest black-owned funeral homes, wiping away tears. "Families are going through a lot of grief, a lot of uncertainty."

Not least the Rhodes Family of Businesses. Even as it arranges memorials for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, the business is struggling to sustain itself.

Many of their employees are missing. Five of the family's six funeral parlors were shuttered by the deluge and several limousines are missing.

On top of that, the Rhodeses worry that many of the working-class and poor families they serve may never return.

"We could lose our funeral home business if that happens," said Rhodes Astorga, 48, who runs the company founded by her grandfather, together with her three older sisters, younger brother and a niece.

The family has retreated to its Baton Rouge parlor, an expan-

sive white-columned building that has seen better days, turning it into a temporary shelter for relatives and friends while also serving the families of other New Orleanians.

On Friday, more than 50 people filed into the chapel to bid farewell to 72-year-old Sister Alma "Honey" James Davis, who died after being evacuated to Mississippi.

Before the service, Davis' nephew, Kevin Blakes, turned to the person behind him and marveled that the Rhodes family was "still doing funeral arrangements in the midst of all the things

going on." The Rhodes siblings offered no hint to the mourners of their own troubles. Instead they stood respectfully, handing tissues to weeping mourners and making sure that the generous bouquet of red roses atop the coffin was placed just right.

"They are as professional as you can get, for any class of people," Blakes said.

Asked if he thought poor and working-class blacks that were evacuated from New Orleans would eventually repopulate the city, Blakes replied: "It's a 50-50 toss-up. Some people don't want to come back. But some people will find that when the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) money runs dry,

See Business on A9

UNCG fuses business, gerontology

Officials call new program the first of its kind

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro hopes to meet the needs of the retiring baby boomers and other older adults with a new dual degree master's program.

The Gerontology Program and the Bryan School of Business and Economics have launched a new M.S. in Gerontology/MBA.

"This new, 57-hour dual degree is the first program of its kind in North Carolina,"

said Dr. Sheldon Balbirer, MBA program director. "The program pools the talents and the resources of two well-established programs at UNCG that are collaborating to produce a graduate degree to meet the needs of the rapidly aging population in North Carolina and the U.S."

The baby boomers, who are now retiring, will be the largest and most affluent group of retirees in American history. According to the U.S. Census Department, the number of those aged 65 or older in North Carolina increased 21 percent from 1990 to 2000. From 2000 to 2030, that population is projected to increase from 969,000 to 2.2 million.

This population increase means an increased demand for those who can care for this population. According to a study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, nearly 6.5 million long-term care workers will be required nationally by 2050 to serve the needs of an aging population.



Balbirer

See UNCG on A9

DELL TO THE RESCUE

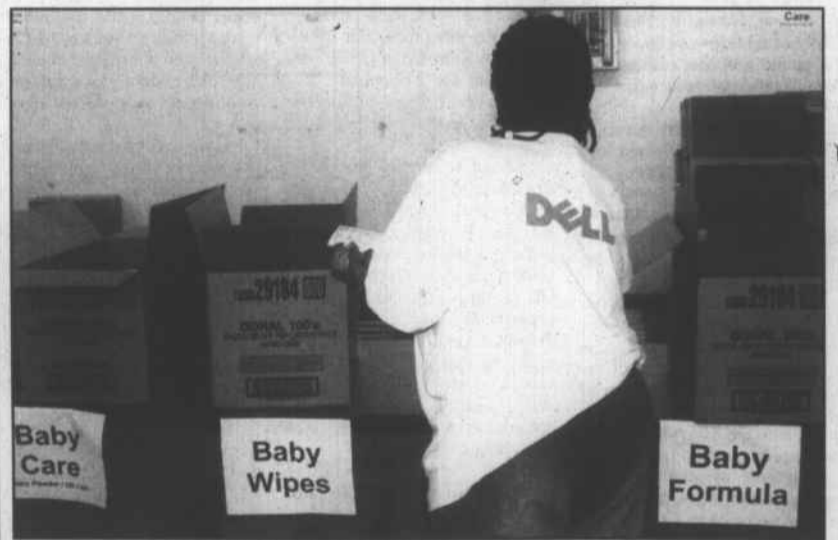


Photo by Jason Pitt

Denise Jones, one of the local people who have landed jobs at the new Dell production facility, was among the Dell employees who volunteered last week at the Second Harvest Food Bank's Hurricane Response Center. Here, Jones sorts various items.

Bank releases latest in Spanish tape series

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

BB&T has released the eighth installment in a groundbreaking series of Spanish-language educational audio-tapes.

The tape offers advice on how to start a small business in America. It is sponsored by BB&T, the N.C. Office of Hispanic/Latino Affairs and El Pueblo Inc.

"This tape is a great resource guide for Hispanics wishing to be entrepreneurs," said Axel Lluch, director of Hispanic and Latino affairs for the N.C. governor's office. "It's a self-guide with a wealth of information that is easy to follow and understand."

The 60-minute "BiBi" (pronounced Bee-Bee) tapes — named for its main character —



are available at no charge throughout BB&T's 1,400-branch network across 11 states and Washington, D.C. The educational tapes are part of BB&T's ongoing Hispanic

Initiative aimed at the 2.3 million Hispanics in its footprint, a segment with an estimated \$40 billion in buying power.

The two-sided "BiBi" cas-

See Tapes on A9