

# BUSINESS FOCUS

## Briefs

### City native looks to make big impact at Boston-area United Way

BOSTON — Jabbar R. Bennett, Ph.D., has been named senior director of development for science, health care and education industry partnerships for United Way of Massachusetts Bay (UWMB) in Boston.

Bennett brings a wealth of education and experience in the life sciences to UWMB and will work with Boston-area corporations to spark young people's interest in pursuing a career in this growing industry.

Bennett, who lives in Brockton, will work to build and strengthen relationships between UWMB and the health care, life science and education sectors by working with executives in these industries and showing them how the work done with children is relevant to these fields.

Bennett's work will also focus on expanding UWMB's Math, Science & Technology Initiative, an after-school program that is currently serving more than 300 children at agencies throughout Greater Boston.

Before joining United Way, Bennett spent three years serving as research and science specialist in the Office for Diversity and Community Partnership at Harvard Medical School. He currently serves as an adjunct professor at Lesley University's School of Education and at Roxbury Community College, and co-chairs the Diversity Committee of the National Postdoctoral Association.

"I'm so enthusiastic about this position," said Bennett. "Working for United Way of Massachusetts Bay gives me the opportunity to impact a vast number of students and expose them to high-quality academic enrichment programs like the Math, Science & Technology Initiative, with the hope that this exposure will inspire them to pursue careers in the life sciences."

A native of Winston-Salem, Bennett attended East Forsyth High School before earning his bachelor's degree in biology with a minor in Spanish from N.C. A&T State University in Greensboro, and his Ph.D. in biomedical sciences from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn.

### Black engineers will celebrate 20th anniversary in Baltimore

This year's Black Engineer of the Year Awards (BEYA) Conference, to be held Feb. 16-18 at the Baltimore Convention Center, marks the event's 20th anniversary. Joining this year's list of accomplished engineers and technologists who will be inducted into the Black Engineer of the Year Awards Alumni Association is this year's top honoree, Lockheed Martin's president of information technology, Linda Gooden, named the Black Engineer of the Year for 2006.

Other award categories include Alumni of the Year, Career Achievement in Government, Career Achievement in Industry, Pioneer Award, Lifetime Achievement, and Most Promising Student, to name a few.

For the second year in a row, the three-day conference will receive the nation's top black CEOs at the Black CEO Summit, which will kick off the conference on Thursday, Feb. 16, with seminars including The War for Talent and Strategic Staffing, the Black CEO Power Luncheon, and the Black CEO Technology Hall of Fame Gala & Dinner.

The conference will also include the African-American Business Forum, the Diversity Career Fair for students, and the very popular One-on-One Career Coaching Roundtables, featuring topics such as Jobs You Should Take and Jobs You Should Pass on Your Way to the Executive Ranks, Time Management for New Managers, and Mentoring: Moving Up the Corporate Ladder by Reaching Back.

For more information about this year's awardees, sponsors, and registration details, visit [www.BEYA.org](http://www.BEYA.org) or call (410) 244-7101.

### Georgian to head National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials

Atlanta Council Member Felicia Moore has been elected to head the National League of Cities (NLC) National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO) constituency group for 2006. Moore will serve a one-year term as president of NBC-LEO. Elected as NBC-LEO president-elect is Terry Riley, councilman from Kansas City, Mo.

"I am humbled by the support given to me by my colleagues from across the country to lead this awesome and powerful organization," said Moore, who also serves as vice chair of NLC's Finance, Administration, and Intergovernmental Relations Steering Committee. Recently she received the prestigious Gold Level Leadership Ambassador Certificate from NLC for her participation in the Leadership Training Institute program.

NBC-LEO was created in 1970 to represent the interests of African-American elected officials. NBC-LEO's objectives include increasing African-American participation on NLC's steering and policy committees to ensure that policy and program recommendations reflect African-American concerns and will benefit their communities.



Moore

## Malls' contest seeks creative business plans

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

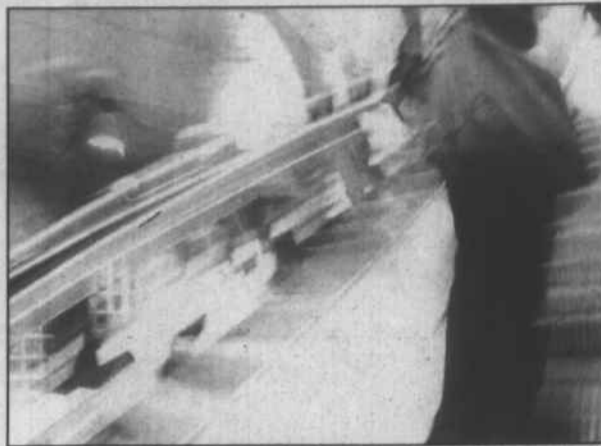
CBL & Associates Properties Inc. unveiled a new competition that will require people to submit creative business retail plans for a chance to win free space in a Triad mall for up to a year.

Last week, the real estate owners of Hanes Mall in Winston-Salem, Oak Hollow Mall in High Point and Randolph Mall in Asheboro announced the kickoff of the Piedmont Retail Business Challenge.

Online entry forms are being accepted at the three participating malls' Web sites. Entrants can register to participate free of charge through Feb. 19. Business plans will be due by April 29.

"CBL is committed to cultivating economic growth and development for new and innovative retail concepts at each of our mall locations, including the three malls in the Piedmont Triad region in North Carolina," said Stephen Lebovitz, president of CBL & Associates Properties Inc.

Criteria used in judging the business plans submitted will include



imagination, creativity, marketability, operational approach and financial viability. Experts in the fields of finances, leasing, management and marketing will serve as primary judges, although input from shoppers will be allowed.

There is a \$200,000 prize package up for grabs that includes up to one-year free rent. Free advertising

packages, Web page design, and Chamber of Commerce membership will also be given to the winning business plan, as well as complimentary office supplies to help launch the winning business plan.

"This challenge represents a unique opportunity for entrepreneurs to launch a new business in one of our market-dominant properties. With the

built-in consumer draw of our retail destinations, this program will provide an ideal venue to introduce new and fresh ideas into the retail environment," Lebovitz said.

With 132 properties affiliated with the company, CBL is one of the largest and most experienced owners and developers of malls and shopping centers in the country. Locations of properties associated with the company can be found in 26 states. CBL's regional office is in Boston, while its corporate office is in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Hanes Mall leases space to retail giants such as Belk, Dillard's, Sears, JCPenney and Hecht's. The mall also features more than 200 specialty shops. It is located between business and bypass I-40, off Silas Creek Parkway.

For more information or to register in the Piedmont Business Challenge, visit one of the three malls' Web sites at [shopanesmall.com](http://shopanesmall.com), [oakhollowmall.com](http://oakhollowmall.com), or [shoprandolphmall.com](http://shoprandolphmall.com). Information is also available at the customer service centers at each mall.

## Real estate vet has high hopes for ERA

BY JAESON PITT  
THE CHRONICLE

With 12 years of experience, the self-proclaimed "Superstar" sales agent and former school bus driver Tammy Watson is ready to sell real estate from her own ERA (Electronic Real Estate Association) Piedmont Realty Franchise. Yes, that's right, franchise.

Watson's new location at 505 High Street across from the Hawthorne Inn just opened Monday and she is already planning on adding offices across the Triad in order to compete with other real estate heavy hitters under the ERA umbrella.

"The next thing we're going to do after things are up and running in the next year to two, is to branch out different ERA offices in the community and Piedmont Triad," she said.

After spending years in the field with Mayfield & Hill Properties and Prudential Carolina Realty, where she was also the first African-American agent hired, Watson felt it was time to step out on her own.

"I learned so much with Prudential and it taught me how to be strong and how to really go out and work the community," she added.

Watson has more than \$12 million in gross and an average of 75 homes sold per year.

The international COO of ERA and Salem College graduate Brenda W. Casserly afforded Watson an opportunity to branch out after seeing Watson's outstanding sales capabilities.

Now that the office doors are open, Watson wants to fill her building with a wide range of sales associates. She currently has four other agents working with her who share the same vision: "committed, innovative, resourceful, and caring" so that they can address the growing needs of customers.

The office's target demographics include first-time buyers, relocators to the city, minority groups, high-end property owners and buyers, and even retirees who want to downsize their living space.

"We're building a diverse group of agents to come here. We want our agents to be able to work with high-end (clients) and help them to even build a house from the ground up. We have all of the resources needed from mortgage companies to titling insurance. They can make one stop at ERA and get everything. We're very strong on customer service," Watson explained, putting emphasis on each group.

As all new businesses that hope for success, Watson has many goals for the company that she hopes will accelerate and separate her simultaneously from the competition.

"I would like to see everything run smoothly in the office and then have strong agents with great training. One of the things we provide is excellent training."



See Watson on A11

Tammy Watson has had a productive career in the industry.

Photo by Jaeson Pitt

## Black union membership stronger than whites'

### Overall, less workers joining

BY WILL LESTER  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Long-declining levels of union membership in the United States leveled off last year at 12.5 percent of the work force, according to a Department of Labor report.

Labor leaders praised the report as encouraging news in difficult times. Union membership was about a third of the work force a half-century ago and was one in five, 20 percent, in 1983, when the Labor Department started keeping data comparable to Friday's report.

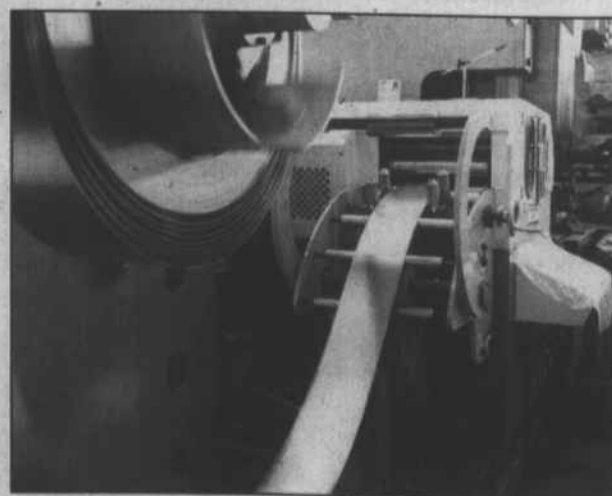
The department reported that 15.7 million workers were union members in 2005. Blacks were more likely than whites, Hispanics

or Asian workers to be members of a union. Men were more likely than women to be in unions, and those in the public sector were four times as likely as those in the private sector to be in unions.

Full-time workers who were union members had median weekly earnings of \$801, compared with a median weekly income of \$622 for workers who were not in unions.

"The good news is that the annual hemorrhaging of union membership slowed last year," said Teamsters' President James P. Hoffa. "And that's not really good news. A worker's right to join a union has been continually eroded by a corporate takeover of our government."

The difficulties facing labor contributed to a split between the AFL-CIO, an umbrella federation of more than 50 unions, and about a half-dozen unions, including the Teamsters, who wanted to focus more resources on building membership.



AFL-CIO President John Sweeney cited the leveling off of union membership as good news for a movement that has faced troubles.

"In a political climate that's hostile to workers' rights," Sweeney said, "these numbers illustrate the extraordinary will of

workers to gain a voice on the job despite enormous obstacles."

Between the major U.S. political parties, Republicans, the current ruling party, are considered generally the party of business, and the currently opposition Democrats traditionally have been the party of workers.