



W-S Prep star is a key to team's success

-See Page B1



Community kitchen opens with high hopes

-See Page A3



Students learn about giving back to others

-See Page A14



THE CHRONICLE

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2006

Union seeks to bridge tech divide

Dell, The Chronicle partner to give community more access to computers

BY T. KEVIN WALKER THE CHRONICLE

Computer giant Dell and The Chronicle have joined forces for a program aimed at getting technology into the hands of local churches and agencies that will put it to good use.

Last month, more than two dozen Dell lap tops - similar to the ones produced at the behemoth Winston-Salem production facility that opened last year - arrived at The Chronicle office. The newspaper, which prides itself on keeping an accurate pulse of the community, has been charged with finding local churches, agencies and groups that would get the most benefit for the machines. Plans are to make the computer distribution annual through a program that has been dubbed the Dell Chronicle Partnership.

"We are very, very serious about improving the communities where we live and work," said Donna Oldham, a city native who is senior communications manager for Dell North Carolina. "We know that there are citizens out there who need help in bridging the digital divide."

The Chronicle is also well aware that the technology divide here in the city is real and troubling. This year alone, the paper



Emery Rann, from left, with Ernie Pitt, the Rev. Samuel Stevenson, the Rev. Calvin Runnels (seated), Donna Oldham and the Rev. Donald Jenkins.

has done more than six stories on the topic. Ernie Pitt, the publisher and co-founder of The Chronicle, said that he knew that many groups were doing their

part to help bridge the divide, but that they were in need of all the help that they could get.

"I knew there were several churches out there with programs

for young people that were struggling with technology," Pitt said. "It is a beautiful thing that this Dell Chronicle Partnership will allow those groups to get some

help." Pitt turned to Bridging Faith Communities to help pinpoint programs in need of technology

See Dell on A12



Local community hero Ben Ruffin was laid to rest on Tuesday.

Mourners celebrate full life of Ruffin

BY LAYLA FARMER THE CHRONICLE

"Lift ev'ry voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring ... let it resound loud as the rolling sea," more than a thousand voices rang out in the sanctuary of Emmanuel Baptist Church Tuesday morning, ... facing the rising sun of our new day begun, let us march on till victory is won." The resonating harmony sprang from the lips of all those who came to honor the memory of the late Benjamin S. Ruffin.

Outside, cars lined both sides of Shalimar Drive and the perpendicular Reynolds Park Boulevard, packing the church yard and parking lots and covering every conceivable inch of space as Ruffin's friends and loved ones came together to remember him.

"We're thankful to each of you for the many individual memories of my father. He held so many of you close and dear," April Ruffin-Adams, Ruffin's daughter, told the audience as she spoke on behalf of the family.

"It's okay if you're sad that he's gone," she continued. "Be sad and be shocked but use that to move forward - in his memory, in his legacy."

Ruffin's legacy is a long and accomplished one, filled with the many inroads he made in the worlds of business and public service. At the time of his death, Ruffin served as CEO of his own company, The Ruffin Group, which he founded in the

See Ruffin on A9

Second Chances

Faith Seeds seeks community help for ex-offenders

BY T. KEVIN WALKER THE CHRONICLE

A local agency continued its efforts late last month to make the community more aware of the plights of ex-offenders.

For the second consecutive year, the Faith Seeds Community Re-entry Coalition held its Restoration Café, a morning-long dialogue that brought together dozens of representatives from social service agencies, law enforcement officials, elected officials, religious leaders and men and women who have served time behind bars for various infractions.

Faith Seeds, a nonprofit, has become the first post-release stop for many ex-offenders. The agency, with the help of its various community and individual partners, steers them toward employment opportunities, housing and other services. Café attendees heard horror stories from ex-offenders who said that life behind bars was easier

than the lack of opportunities they faced when they were released. Often employers and landlords slam the door on those with criminal records, several people said. The central goal of the café, according to Faith Seeds leader Sharon Glover, is to keep the issue of re-entry on the community's radar screen.



Glover

"One group can't fix everything ... there has to be a community dialogue," she said. Although programs like Faith Seeds need some funding, Glover made it a point to say that money is not always the answer, either. Her agency has been able to help countless ex-offenders by building bridges with other local agencies.

"I believe that people solve problems," Glover said.

The Nov. 17 powwow began at Winston-Salem State University's Anderson Center with a light breakfast and ended with lunch. What came in between was several hours of brainstorming and sounding-off. Attendees rotated from table-to-table

See Faith Seeds on A11



The Rev. William Barber gives the keynote address.

Students and their parents sold on the new Atkins High

New high school in search of more students



Animator Keith Hobgood speaks to the audience last week.

BY TODD LUCK THE CHRONICLE

Nearly 400 people were in attendance last Thursday night at Atkins Academic and Technology High School for a presentation that pitched the school to eighth-graders and their families.

The event was an attempt to attract more students to Atkins, a magnet school that houses three separate schools under one roof. The mini-schools focus on biotechnology, pre-engineering and computer technology. The school is growing its student body. Atkins started with only sixth- and seventh-grades, added 11th-grade this year and will add 12th-grade next year. The school, which is now over a year old, has the capacity for 1,200 students and currently has about 725, according to

Photo by Todd Luck

Atkins Executive Principal Dan Figgott. Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools Superintendent Don Martin talked about how the new school came about, built under the vision of a place that will engage students while preparing them for the high tech jobs of tomorrow. Now, he hopes that students will take advantage of what Atkins has to offer.



Figgott

"I think a lot of people here probably saw (the movie) 'Field of Dreams.'" "If you build it, they'll come," Martin said, quoting a famous line from the film. "Part of it was building it and we're hoping some folks will come."

To illustrate how high-tech training

can translate into real local jobs, Keith Hobgood from Out of Our Minds Animation Studios showed one of his company's computer animated short films. Out of Our Minds is responsible for the recent animated Dixie Classic Fair television commercials as well as several award-winning short films. The company is currently working on its first feature length film. Hobgood said that he hated the first film he worked on while he was making it. Ten months later when he was sitting behind Johnny Depp in London at the British Academy Awards, where the film was nominated, he changed his mind about

See Atkins on A11

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