



Atkins ready to prove themselves

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Girls explore history on trip

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Class holds 50-year reunion

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A tearful Annie Hamlin Johnson and Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin react to an honorary plaque commissioned by the Twin City Quarter to honor Larry Leon Hamlin. Also pictured is the Quarter's Grant Minnix.

THE SHOW GOES ON

Hamlin gone but not forgotten

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

It was Winston-Salem or bust for Dionne Audain and several of her girlfriends.

The young women packed a rental car to the max earlier this week, made their way onto Washington D.C.'s busy interstates and several hours later arrived here.

It wasn't long before they found out why this town has been called "Black Theater Holy Ground."

"It is like a business conference for us," Audain said Tuesday night in the packed lobby of the Downtown Marriott. "As black actresses, it is our business to be here."

Somewhere, looking down from the heavens, NBTf Founder Larry Leon Hamlin must feel a great sense



Local dancers lead a parade of celebrities during Monday's gala.

of accomplishment. He created the festival in 1989 so that African-Americans with dreams of stardom could have a place to network, rejuvenate and be inspired. For nine festi-

vals, Hamlin oversaw that mission and watched as his creation grew grander in size and scope.

See NBTf on A13

BALANCING ACT

Actress' favorite role is that of wife and mom

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

If Vanessa Bell Calloway had a dime for every time someone asked her to "bark like a dog," she'd be set for life.

"Someone just said that to me a minute ago when I was up there on the podium," the actress said Monday, after officially opening the 2007 National Black Theatre Festival, where she is serving as the celebrity chairwoman.

The classic line is from Calloway's scene-stealing role in "Coming to America," in which she played Eddie Murphy's "queen to be." There have been many other memorable roles and unforgettable scenes.

In "What's Love Got To Do With It," Calloway taught Angela Bassett (Tina Turner) a soul-affirming Buddhist chant; and in "Biker Boyz" she delivered the mother of all rhetorical questions to actor Derek Luke when she asked "Do you know what they call bikers in the ER? Organ donors!"

Fans won't let Calloway forget any of those cinematic moments. "People come up to me on a regular basis, I mean like everyday, and recite my lines to me," said Calloway, whose credits also include big-screen favorites like "The Inkwell" and "Crimson Tide" and television shows such as "The District," "All My Children" and "Boston Public."



Vanessa Bell Calloway is back at the NBTf.

See Calloway on A5

Much-loved Paisley leader won't return

Pittman-Couch retires after almost 40 years in education

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

This month's start of the 2007-2008 school year will mark the dawning of a new era for Marion Pittman-Couch. An educator for 37 years, she retired last week from her position as principal of Paisley IB World Magnet School.

Pittman-Couch is now working as a consultant for the International Baccalaureate Association out of New York. Though she will have to adjust to life without school bells and the laughter of children in the hallways, the veteran educator says she feels confident about the legacy she has left behind.

"I wanted to leave a legacy of a quality educational program that was going to prepare them for anything that they wanted to do in life," she commented. "I would tell the students in the opening assembly that ... they all had greatness; it was just a matter of developing it."

Pittman-Couch took the helm at Paisley just before neighborhood schools became

the norm, and watched the enrollment at Paisley plummet as a result of the policy, which ended crosstown busing.

"The first year I was at Paisley, we had 825 students and that was during the time of busing and students were assigned to their schools," she explained. "The next year, when ... students and parents elected their school, our enrollment dropped to 301 - 1 lost half the staff, half the student body."

Pittman-Couch says she and her staff were disheartened by the sudden changes that seemed to cause the school to fall by the wayside. She was determined to do something about it.

Already, she had been researching International Baccalaureate (IB) schools, in hopes of implementing such a program at Paisley, and in the wake of the enrollment shift, she knew the time to act was at hand.

"That was when I introduced the IB concept to them, saying, this would be a great



Pittman-Couch

See Principal on A15

Wake Forest's Boko plays tour guide in Africa

Professor organizes learning trip for colleagues from ACC schools

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Professors from up and down the East Coast got to experience the struggles of South Africa, Rwanda and Uganda firsthand, during a three week trip led and organized by Wake Forest Economics Professor Sylvain Boko.

Professors from 11 of the 12 Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) colleges toured countries that have been torn apart by violence. A Wake Forest student also went on the trip.

The trip was sponsored by the ACC's Inter-institutional Academic Collaborative, an initiative that supports research in areas where one university couldn't sustain a full program alone.

Among those who went on the trip was Robin Kirk, the director of the Human Rights Initiative at Duke University. Though she has taught about Rwanda and

South Africa in her human rights classes, Kirk had never been to Africa before and was struck by how hard it is for a country torn apart by violence to heal itself.

"How difficult, and that seems like an understatement, but how difficult it is to get a society out of a moment of violence," said Kirk. "I think all of us human beings are sort of predisposed to think that things can be fixed, but it was really ... sobering to see how long things stay broken and how much effort and how much goodwill and how much political expertise it takes to bring a country out of a time like that."

Boko, a native of Benin, Africa, said that it's very important to educate Americans about the troubles Africa faces. He asserted his belief that the international community has the ability to positively impact African nations. The more people



Boko

See Trip on A15



Nobel winner fends off anti-Semitism charges

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Like many trailblazers the world over, Nobel Prize-winning Poet Wole Soyinka does not shy away from controversy, although it has a habit of finding him.

Known for his activism and unyielding resolve to bring equality to his Nigerian countrymen, Soyinka was once imprisoned for his efforts to bring about peace to his war-torn nation.

Yet, recently, the poet and playwright has unwittingly received criticism for remarks he allegedly made when he addressed the Theatre Communications Group at a June 8 gathering in Minnesota. Soyinka talked about the brouhaha Tuesday as he keynoted the National Black Theatre Festival's International Colloquium, a series of discussions and lectures that mesh the world of art with academia.

His June speech questioned the wisdom of the political process that put George W. Bush in power, and Soyinka

See Soyinka on A4

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