



**Native cheers for the Redskins**

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**Students sleep outdoors for a cause**

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# THE CHRONICLE

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## In Lt. Gov's race, Besse relies on roots

BY LAYLA FARMER  
THE CHRONICLE

It seems that City Council Member Dan Besse has always had a mind for politics.

When he was in junior high, he volunteered for his first political campaign and started a petition to block the desecration of the woods behind his childhood home in Hickory.

By high school, he was a staunch environmentalist, patrolling streams in search of leaking pipes or signs of illegal dumping.

"My parents were not politically involved ... but they taught me ... that the way we could change things was through the Democratic process," Besse said. "I always looked to elections and politics as a way to implement change."

His parents' lessons weighed heavily on his decision to run for the City Council in 2001. The Democrat defeated a popular

Republican incumbent to win the Southwest Ward seat. He won re-election easily in 2005.

Besse is hoping for another victory a year from now. He is one of four Democrats so far who have thrown their hats into the ring for the N.C. Lieutenant Governor's job.

While Besse's reputation here in his own backyard is solid, not much is known about him in other parts of the state. Over the next year, he says, he and his growing list of supporters will work to change all of that. No doubt, the other Democrats in the race - Canton Mayor Pat Smathers, Durham lawyer Hampton Dellinger and State Sen. Walter Dalton - have similar game plans.

The competition is stiff, according to Fred Terry, a former City Council Member who served with Besse and is the chair of the



Terry



See Besse on A13 Dan Besse speaks at a recent Urban League event.

## Acclaimed playwright settles down in Winston

Garrett Davis' holiday play hits stage Dec. 8

BY LAYLA FARMER  
THE CHRONICLE

Union Baptist Church will welcome the presence of a new Christmas tradition and perhaps, the dawning of a new era for Playwright Garrett Davis, one of its newest members, all in one fell swoop, with the premiere of the holiday production, "The Real Meaning of Christmas."

Penning by Davis and performed by church members, the play will be held at the church Dec. 8.

Davis, a native of Warren County, NC, said he fell in love with theater after seeing a play as a college student. Inspired by what he had seen, Davis tried his hand as a playwright.

"I wrote a play because that play just moved me so much it was something I wanted to do," he said.

A communications major with a love for radio broadcasting, Davis says his flair for theater took a back seat to his career for several years. He produced his first play, meant to serve as a fundraiser, in the early 1990s.

"Success hit me very quickly," he recalled. "I was named the Funniest Gospel Playwright in America by the NAACP in '96. I toured that play for the next five years - that's all I did."

Riding on waves of critical acclaim, Davis says it seemed the good times would last forever.

"At that time in the early 1990s, the only play on the east coast that was having any success was my play, 'Lord Why Me?' and a man by the name of David Peyton, who had a play called, 'A Good Man is Hard to Find,'" he commented. "No one told me that it was going to end."

When it came time to start anew, Davis was faced with the daunting task of trying to recreate his initial success.



Garrett Davis

## Volunteers work to provide X-mas bikes

BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE

Students at Forsyth Technical Community College are working tirelessly to restore used bicycles to give to disadvantaged children this holiday season.

The program called "A Bicycle Built for You" collects donated bikes dropped off at any of FTCC's locations and gives them to the Salvation Army. The bikes will go to the organization's toy shop where families that qualify for the Salvation Army's aid get to pick out toys for their children.

The bikes that are donated can be new, but bikes that are dirty, worn or broken are welcome as well. That's where FTCC student volunteers come in, donating their time and hard work to make the used bikes as good as new again. The students clean, paint and even replace bad parts on the bikes, restoring them to their former glory.

The project is the brain child of Mark Walker, auto body program coordinator at FTCC, who did a similar program for several years when he taught at Davidson Community College over a decade ago. Walker said he wanted to teach his students not only about teamwork but also about giving back.

"I told them to think about (how) not everybody grew up having everything at Christmas and know this situation, it does very much still exist in the United States, it's not just a world wide thing," said Walker.

Walker said the volunteers come



Eric Rivers, left, and Cory Hooks repair a used bike.

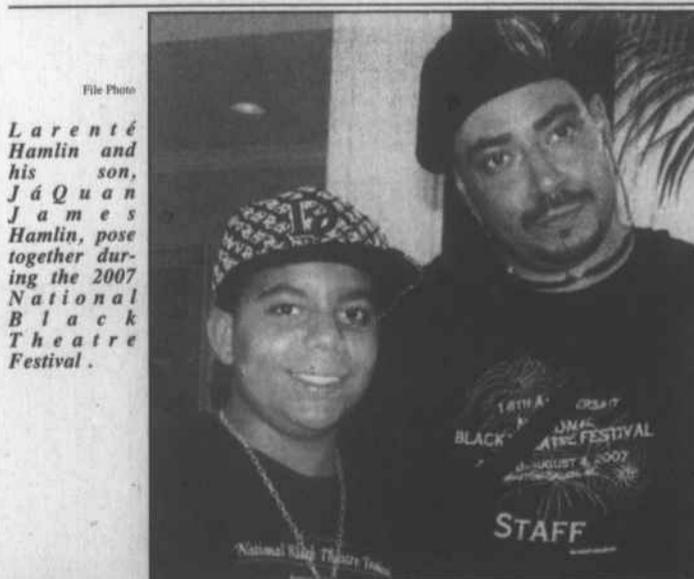
from auto body classes, the Motor Sports Club of Forsyth Tech and the general student body. A couple of auto body classes that were learning detailing worked on painting the bikes in class but other than that, Walker said, the work has been purely voluntary.

Walker said the response has been great. As of two weeks ago, well over hundred bikes had been collected and he said he hoped to get hundreds more. He said he wanted every child that meets the Salvation Army's criteria and wants a bike to have one.

Walker said that he and fellow

auto body instructor Alton Allen have actually gone out to many people's houses who had a hard time getting to their old bikes or couldn't transport them to the drop off site. Allen has also been in the workshop working

See Bikes on A6



Larenté Hamlin and his son, JáQuan James Hamlin, pose together during the 2007 National Black Theatre Festival.

## Hamlin's kin continue theater legacy

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

For years, the late Larry Leon Hamlin created vibrant and intense productions through this state's first professional black theatrical company, the North Carolina Black Repertory Company (NCBRC). Now his protégés are continuing his work and vision of excellence.

JáQuan James Hamlin, the 13-year-old grandson of Hamlin, has begun an apprenticeship program with the company's tech crew. He is busy now preparing for the Black Rep's upcoming performances of "Black Nativity."

"I started out by helping the tech people backstage with whatever they needed during different shows. Got things for cast members and listened a lot," explains JáQuan. "Now I work with the light board and sometimes I work the fly rail above the stage."

On the fly rail, a technician manually "flies" in suspended set pieces to become part of a scene.

At 7, JáQuan began helping in the NCBRC office under the watchful eyes



Hamlin

of his grandfather and his father, Larenté Leon Hamlin. He folded programs, made copies, stuffed and sorted envelopes for large mailings - and during rehearsals - he often ran between the office and backstage getting things for the technical director and executive producer. But this year, during the 2007 National Black Theatre Festival, JáQuan was officially assigned to the

crew at the Stevens Center.

"I mainly listened and did what I was told, and watched what the professionals did so I could learn," he says.

It's not surprising JáQuan enjoys working with his hands. He takes after his father, Larenté.

"I've always been a technical person, by trade I was a mechanic," explains Larenté Hamlin. "I went from cars to computers and from computers into the theatre. And I've been off and running ever since."

In 2001, Larenté Hamlin, along with his son, joined Larenté's father, Larry Leon Hamlin, in the family business - the Black Rep. For years, Larry Leon Hamlin encouraged his son to leave Providence, R.I. and settle in Winston-Salem to work with the company.

See Hamlin on A6



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