



Former East star still playing good ball

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Talented baker creates wonders

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Homeless kids treated to party

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North Carolina Room
Forsyth County Public Library
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Winston-Salem, NC 27101
THURSDAY, December 20, 2007

'Worse than Jena'

NAACP sounding alarm over 21-year-old facing murder charges

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Claims that an overzealous, racially-biased Louisiana prosecutor was hell-bent on destroying the lives of six black teenagers created an international uproar earlier this year.

The Rev. William Barber hopes that there is still some indignation left in the world after the massive hubbub sparked by the Jena 6 case.

The fiery Baptist preacher has become a Civil Rights missionary since he was elected president of the N.C. NAACP in 2005. He came to town Sunday to win over hearts and minds for his latest battle - an attempt, Barber says, to keep 21-year-old James Johnson from becoming another Darryl Hunt.

"This could have been any one of our children,"

Barber, speaking about Johnson's circumstances, told congregants Sunday at Goler Memorial AME Zion Church as James Johnson, his parents, Arthur and Beverly, and several of his supporters sat on a pew near the front of the church.

Winston-Salem resident Darryl Hunt became a poster child for the injustice of the criminal justice system when he was freed from prison in 2003, after serving nearly two decades for a murder and rape he did not commit. Hunt, whose harrowing experiences are told in the critically-acclaimed HBO documentary, "The Trials of Darryl Hunt," was finally freed by DNA evidence, although doubts about his guilt were apparent from the very beginning.

Johnson's circumstances are eerily similar to the ones that a then 19-year-old Hunt found himself in in 1984. Johnson was 18-years-old in 2004, when he was jailed in his native

See Johnson on A4

Kwanzaa events start on Dec. 26

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Someday soon, Christmas will be over.

The countless versions of "White Christmas" and "Silent Night" will disappear from the airwaves. Gifts will be given, perhaps returned to the store and pre-Christmas bustle will finally begin to subside.

But the holidays will be just beginning for hundreds of people across the city, as it gears up for another year of citywide Kwanzaa events beginning Dec. 26.

Observed Dec 26 - Jan. 1 each year, Kwanzaa is a seven day-long celebration of African ancestry and tradition. Seven principles govern the observance of the holidays, and celebrants gather to observe and recognize one each day. Not to be confused with religious ceremonies, Kwanzaa is a cultural celebration founded around the heritage of African Americans specifically and all people in general.

Renee Andrews has been a librarian in the Winston-Salem community for 27 years. She remembers when the observance of Kwanzaa began with the wishes of a handful of people that gathered at the East Winston branch of the library. The group observed the sixth day of Kwanzaa, "kuumba," which means "creativity."

"Our children were young and we wanted to introduce them to the African American culture and for them to have a sense of pride about who they were," Andrews said.

See Kwanzaa on A11

James Johnson greets a churchgoer Sunday at Goler Memorial. Beside him is his father, Arthur.



Barber

Students' roads to graduation varied

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

The excitement was palpable in the corridors of Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum Friday afternoon as the soon-to-be Winston-Salem State University alumni gathered for the 4 p.m. fall commencement ceremony.

With the first chords of the graduation march, screams of anticipation rose from the sea of black robes, and the graduates began slowly striding into the coliseum.

They were a medley of determined souls, each with their own story, their own struggle, and now, their own triumph.

Among them was Garrett Garms, a magna cum laude graduate who traveled the world during his time at the university.

"I went to West Africa on a trip with the school - got the trip paid for by taking pictures," explained Garms. "Almost a year later, I got to go to Fiji ... and I got to

go there for a whole semester."

A Winston-Salem native and a graduate of Reynolds High School, Garms says he achieved things he never thought possible while at WSSU.

"It's a great institution. It (has) diversity ... small classroom sizes, great professors ... great staff, I mean, class-A professors," he said. "I don't think you could go anywhere else in the world and find better professors."

John Corbett went through a war - quite literally - to walk across the stage that day. Corbett, 30, a gerontology major, was attending school on the GI Bill.

"I started off in 2003 and then the first semester, the fall semester, got called to Iraq because I was ... with the National Guard," he said. "I was over there for a year, 2004-2005, and I came back and I started the program again."

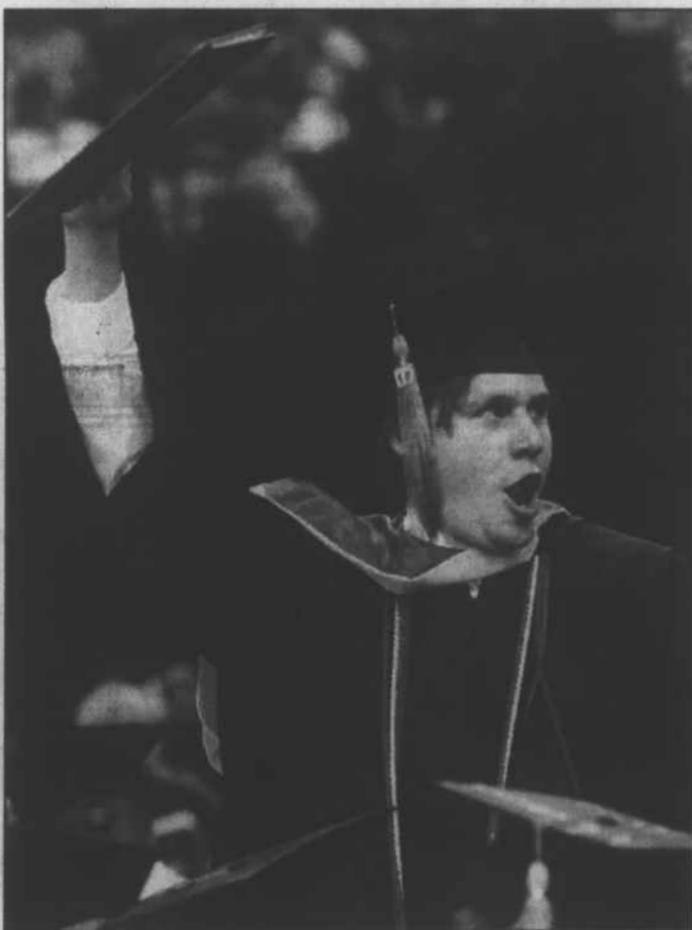
Remarkably, he finished on time and with a 3.89 GPA. Though his time with the Guard is almost up, Corbett says his unit is not out of the woods yet.

"We have an alert saying that we might go back over there the beginning of 2009," he commented. "It's nothing official but it's out there."

Tuajuana Smoot-Hairston was fighting her own battles on the home front.

"I'm a mother of two with one on the way in January, hopefully I can make it across the stage before it comes," she

See Graduates on A11



Garrett Garms celebrates after receiving his degree last week.

Photo by Lee Adams/WSSU



Andrews

Downtown's first grocery store open for business

TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

A crowd of more than 50 people gathered last Friday for the much anticipated opening of downtown's first full-fledged grocery store.

Kingz In Town Grocery Store officially opened its doors after a brief ribbon cutting ceremony attended by city heavyweights like Jason Thiel, president of the Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership, and Mayor Allen Joines.

"I want to say from a downtown perspective, I get asked almost everyday about a grocery store downtown and so here it is," said Thiel to a cheering crowd.

Keith King, the owner of the store, greeted the crowd and then welcomed them in to look and shop.

"I told a few (people) who asked me why I wanted to put a



Photo by Todd Luck

Keith and Denise King stand beside Mayor Allen Joines, left, during last week's ribbon-cutting event.

grocery store downtown, I said what I'm going to try to do is two things some businesses don't do, and that's give the customers what they want and

give them what they need," said King. "And I believe if I do that I'll be very, very successful here."

Joines said residents asked

him at least twice a day about when a grocery store would open downtown, which has

See Kingz on A13

SANTA CLAUS IS COMING



Photo by Anthony Hill

Last week, kids at Reynolds Park Recreation Center shared their Christmas wish lists with Santa, who will soon be making his list - and checking it twice. Coach Buddy Hayes, a longtime advocate for kids, dressed the part.



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