

**FTCC**

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for that highly motivated student that's willing and has the capability to discipline themselves to do the work because you know you're essentially covering 16 weeks worth of work in eight weeks," said Yevin.

Yevin, along with Sybil Rinehardt, dean of arts and sciences, developed Fast Track for FTCC.

Yevin said the program also saves students money since they only pay for one year of community college instead of two years, and they will have to pay far less at a four-year school since they will enter as juniors.

Diana Campbell, the coordinator of the school's college transfer program, said that already more than 15 students have signed up for some Fast Track classes, with at least two interested in doing the entire year's worth of Fast Track courses. She said she's surprised at the popularity of the brand new scheduling option and that the amount of courses will be adjusted in the future based on demand.

Campbell said that the courses have attracted both traditional students, who come to college right out of high school, and non-traditional students, whose path to college has taken a little

longer. She said the amount of time students can devote to their studies tends to be the common thread in those who want to do the year's worth of courses.

"They seem to be in sort of a period between two parts of their lives, and they want to spend this year in a really productive way, and this is ideal for that," said Campbell.

One non-traditional student who has signed up for Fast Track is 27-year-old Mary Etienne, who recently moved to Winston-Salem with her husband, Jonathan. She's attended colleges off and on as a part-time student while holding down a job as well. Now that she's saved up enough money to pay off some debt, she finally has enough time to devote herself to college full-time.

Etienne, who wants to pursue a career in psychology, is excited about the possibilities that her future may hold if she earns a bachelor's degree. Fast Track will help those possibilities come her way much quicker.

"It helps me get to my goal faster and at the same time fits into my life a lot better than a 16 week course," said Etienne, who eventually wants to earn a master's.

For information about enrolling at FTCC call 336-723-0371 or visit [www.forsythtech.edu](http://www.forsythtech.edu).

**Election**

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"The diversity used to be mainly in pretty safe states, like Texas, California and New York," he said.

The Census Bureau last week released 2007 data on race, age and Hispanic origin for all 3,141 counties in the nation. The Associated Press used the data to analyze 129 key counties in 14 states expected to be the most competitive in this year's presidential election. Each county was decided by no more than 5 percentage points in the past two elections, and each sits in a state that could go either way this year.

The analysis showed that from 2000 to 2007, minorities made up a growing share of the population in all but 12 of the swing counties. The changes happened among every age group, even seniors, though they were much more pronounced among the young, including those too young to vote.

Obama, who had a white mother and black father, overwhelmingly won the black vote in the Democratic primaries, and he is polling more strongly than Republican John McCain among Hispanics.

Both candidates are targeting voters under 30. But while young voters have increased their turnout in recent elections, they are still less likely to vote than any other age group.

Obama "may be generating excitement," said Vincent Hutchings, associate professor of political science at the University of Michigan. "But is he generating enough enthusiasm to excite people who lack a formal education and are disproportionately young, and not likely to vote?"

Hutchings said the demographic changes could affect this year's election, but he expects the impact to be greater in future elections as young minorities, particularly the booming Hispanic population, become older and more politically active.

The Census numbers are based on estimates, and in some counties, changes in racial composition are small enough to be statistically insignificant. But the trend is clear: The nation is becoming increasingly diverse, even more so in areas that have been decisive the past two presidential elections.

The AP analysis looked at counties in Colorado, Florida,

Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin. Nevada also was analyzed because it is a competitive state this year. None of the state's counties met the criteria for swing counties in the previous two elections, but each has become more diverse, since the decade began.

Some states are more competitive than others, and many of the counties remained overwhelmingly white. But given the closeness of the past two presidential elections, even small changes could make a difference in competitive states.

For example, Lake County, just northeast of Cleveland, is still 92 percent white. But since the start of the decade, the number of Hispanics has grown by 73 percent and the black population has increased by 47 percent. The number of whites has dropped slightly in a county that President Bush narrowly won in 2000 and 2004.

Hillsborough County, N.H., home to Manchester, is still 89 percent white. But the number of Hispanics has grown by 57 percent and the number of blacks has increased by 56 percent. The white population has increased by just 2 percent in a county that Bush barely won twice.

The nation's minority population has grown through higher birthrates and immigration. As a result, the share of minorities increased between 2000 and 2007 in every state but Hawaii and the District of Columbia.

Nationally, the white population grew by just 2 percent in that time, while the number of blacks increased by 10 percent and the number of Hispanics grew by 29 percent.

In the swing counties examined by the AP, the black population grew by an average of 18 percent and the number of Hispanics increased by 45 percent. The white population on average grew by less than a percent in the 129 counties.

"In many ways demographic differences are the raw material for party politics," said John Green, director of the University of Akron's Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics.

"If the election is close, it could come down to small demographic changes in some areas."

**Diversity festival promotes unity**

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

They were black and white and every shade in between and as varied as the bubbles they created with a pail of soapy water and an assortment of odd-shaped doodads.

The scene was a far cry from a Norman Rockwell painting, but in 2008, the racially eclectic children that laughed and played together Saturday at Lanterns of Hope are a snapshot of the new America.

Annually, Lanterns is held to celebrate the county's growing diversity while bringing people together to celebrate differences and similarities.

"This is something that we want to make sure takes place every year," said Joel White, the co-chair of the Forsyth County Library's Cultural Diversity Committee, which counts Lanterns as one of its most important initiatives.

Seldom does a week pass when there is not some sort of Library promoting the cultures of the various people who now call this county home. White says it is the library's responsibility to take the lead in trying to knock down racial and cultural barriers and replace them with bridges.

"Everyday, we get people from all backgrounds (at



Above: Chad Morris performs on Saturday.

Right: Tricia Willard with sons, Luke and Travis.

library branches). We are the meeting place for the community," he said.

If it is not at the library or a local school, Tricia Willard makes it her business to find cultural awareness programs to take her boys to.

"I think it is important that we all know each other. It is something that we all need to do," she said.

Willard is white and the father of her sons, Travis and Luke Lawrence, is African-American. She says her sons' mixed heritage has never blatantly been an issue (although she is sometimes asked if she is baby-sitting the boys). But on a recent trip to Washington, D.C., Willard

attendees were entertained and occupied by several kids' attractions, live music and dancers and generous chunks of sweet watermelon - all of which was enjoyed inside downtown's Corpening Plaza.

As is tradition, the event ended when attendees floated the lanterns they made from paper and sticks in one of the plaza's concrete water basins. The lanterns were decorated with things like colorful hearts and stars and words like "peace" and "love." The mini candles that were placed in each white lantern were lit before they went adrift, creating an eye-catching scene as dusk approached.

Chad Morris thinks events like Lanterns should not be underestimated in their ability to build bonds and change mindsets.

"There is a lot of fear, I think, that causes most (racism). We are scared of something different."

Morris, who performed a lively musical set with the bands Don Quijote and The Windmills, feels fortunate that his eyes were opened early as he grew up in Spain, where his parents served as missionaries. He speaks (and sings) Spanish fluently, and counts among his friends people of all cultures and races.

"I think I was lucky growing up in Spain," he said.

One day, White wants people to say that about Forsyth County - that they learned to love and embrace diversity while living here. But he knows that will take some time and work. The Library, he says, is ready and willing to invest both.

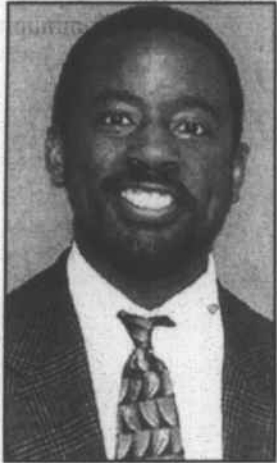


noticed that no one gave her family a second glance. There weren't any stares, either.

"I think we (Winston-Salem) still can make a lot of improvements," she said.

White and others hope that Lanterns of Hope is a small, positive step in that direction.

For more than two and a half hours Saturday evening,



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