

OP/ED



ERNEST H. PITT
ELAINE PITT
T. KEVIN WALKER

Publisher/Co-Founder
Business Manager
Managing Editor

Pound for Pound



Denise Hartsfield
Guest Columnist

I was excited and relieved to see that the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals had overturned the decision of the Middle District of North Carolina in the case of Ernie Pitt. The long-awaited decision was confirmation once again that God still answers prayers, and that the prayers of the righteous avail much. Our faith is often tested by the things that we are unable to see and by our inability to know and understand how God is taking care and working out the situation.

Kudos to Ernie Pitt and the Winston-Salem *Chronicle* staff for never missing a beat during this almost four-year ordeal. *The Chronicle*, through it all, continued to be a beacon of light in this community, spreading the positive things that are happening in the city. Never was there an ill word, or journalistic attempt to play defense when character, reputation and integrity

were placed on the line. *The Chronicle* continued to host events and recognize achievements of citizens in spite of the allegations and legal woes. Mr. Pitt did not shy away from his civic or church duties. He kept a smile and good disposition and continued to publish good news in the wake of his personal "bad news."

Although it may seem that the government got its "pound of flesh," the rewards from the decision weigh heavier than the government's "pound." Pound for pound, the post benefits are the champions, most importantly the restoration of character, integrity and faith.

I would be less than truthful if I painted a picture of an unwavering faith and a soul that did not sometimes worry and doubt. Mr. Pitt and I traveled a portion of the faith journey together. We were often guests at each other's pity parties as we waited to see what the end was going to be. We both came to trust God all the more, and to never let go of His unchanging hand. That, in the end, is the ultimate victory.

Although the possibility of a re-trial and other appel-

late decisions may be forthcoming, the lessons and the faith walk have been the true victors, and no matter what the future holds, the lesson learned is that believers know who really holds the future.

I have not come up with Ernie Pitt's new name. Maybe "Kunte" or "Newspaper George." Maybe he needs to trace his family tree and find out how his ancestors moved from slavery to freedom. What I do know is that the quest for freedom will not let you sit back and observe. The quest makes you restless and makes the things unseen seem all the more possible. We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes, but don't forget, none of us are free until all of us are free.

With dignity and grace, Ernie Pitt got to see freedom. I know that he will not rest in it, but he will continue to strive for freedom in this city as he continues to be the voice of a positive message for lives in this community.

Denise Hartsfield is a local District Court judge and community servant.



Host Committee Director of Business Relations Robyn Hamilton speaks.

DNC

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35,000 visitors to the area – goes off without a hitch.

"Our role is really the hospitality end of things and helping to tell the story of Charlotte and the Carolinas," Murrey explained. "It's not just an important political gateway; it's a larger social and cultural event."

Although the official Convention won't start until Labor Day week, activities will kickoff the Saturday before with a media welcoming party at the NC Music Factory. The Convention has been shortened one day from its typical four-day run to make room for a free, Labor Day celebration known as Carolina Fest 2012. The ticketed event will feature live music and a variety of family friendly activities at the Charlotte Motor Speedway.

Convention events will be staged Tuesday and Wednesday at Time Warner Cable Arena, and President Obama's official nomination and acceptance speech will take place on Thursday at Bank of America Stadium, home of the Carolina Panthers. Delegate parties will be hosted at a dozen locations across the area.

The Convention offers ample opportunities for local citizens and companies to get a piece of the action, Committee members said.

"The goal is to let our volunteers select when and how they want to volunteer – there's definitely something for everyone," said Director of Volunteer Operations for the Host Committee Courtney Count. "The response has been overwhelming, just like everything has been from a volunteer perspective surrounding this convention."

Robyn Hamilton, Host Committee director Procurement and Business Operations, encouraged the business owners present to sign up for the Vendor Directory the Committee has created for the event. The Host Committee is encouraging outside firms to partner with local companies whenever possible, and the influx of people from all across the world will generate projects that require a wide variety of expertise, Hamilton said.

"I often tell business owners, 'Don't discount what you may have to offer, because



Courtney Count talks about volunteering opportunities.

you don't know what the folks coming in town will need," Hamilton said. "We've seen people that are utilizing that vendor directory for different things. We wanted to make sure that firms were coming in and partnering with our local firms."

Hamilton added that the Committee is making minority and women-owned business participation a high priority.

Following the formal talk, Murrey, Hamilton and Count fielded questions from the audience on everything from available volunteer opportunities and accommodations to the atmosphere in Charlotte during the event. Murrey assured the audience that the Convention is doing everything in its power to put on a high profile event with minimal intrusion into the lives of local residents.

"There's really a big effort to try to make as little impact as we can on people's everyday lives," he said.

For more information, visit <http://charlottein2012.com>.

Save Black Men – Get Your PSA Screening



Marc Morial
Guest Columnist

"With the prevalence of prostate cancer disproportionately affecting our men, we must be vigilant to ensure aggressive testing continues for this most vulnerable population." – Cedric M. Bright, M.D., president of the National Medical Association.

Last week, the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommended that healthy men should no longer take a routine PSA blood test for prostate cancer because the procedure may lead patients to pursue unnecessary and potentially debilitating treatments for a disease that may never fully develop. This week, the National Urban League joins the National Medical Association, the Prostate Health Education Network (PHEN), the American Urological Association and other leading medical experts in rejecting that conclusion, especially for African American men, who are 60 percent more likely to develop prostate cancer and twice as likely to die from it.

We agree that unnecessary medical tests should be avoided, but the evidence for eliminating PSA screenings for prostate cancer, especially for African American men, is inconclusive at best. Instead of abandoning PSA screenings for everyone, we encourage more education for both providers and patients that will allow men to make more informed decisions about the risks and benefits of the test. There are several reasons for our position.

First, while prostate cancer remains the second-leading cause of cancer death among men, we also know that advances in early detection and treatment have resulted in a 40 percent decline in prostate deaths in the United States over the past two decades. The National Medical Association



(NMA), the nation's leading advocate for African American physicians and patients, has stated that PSA screening remains the best method to detect early stage, curable prostate cancers. The group endorses the American Urological Association's guidelines for early detection, which include initial PSA testing at 40 years and a multi-factorial assessment of risk based on age, ethnicity and family history.

Second, the NMA also points out that the USPSTF made its recommendation based on large clinical studies performed in Europe, Canada and the United States, which included very few African American men.

And third, while the USPSTF correctly states that a percentage of men will experience harmful side effects from treatments following the PSA test, the test itself is risk-free. It simply alerts both doctor and patient to the possible presence of disease.

Anthony D'Amico, chief of Genitourinary Radiation Oncology at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, suggests that the USPSTF's recommendation may actually be harmful to high-risk groups,

which includes African American men. He said, "I think men at high risk ... have the most to lose from not getting PSA tests. They are the ones who get the lethal cancers."

In a letter accompanying the USPSTF recommendation in the May 21 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, D'Amico and other leading prostate cancer experts concluded, "The USPSTF has underestimated the benefits and overestimated the harms of prostate cancer screening. Therefore, we disagree with the USPSTF's recommendation."

So do we. Since 1922, the National Urban League has been a leading provider of health-related services in the African American community. We urge African American men to continue discussing the pros and cons of prostate cancer screening with their doctors. And we support more community-based education and early intervention efforts for low-income and minority patients who face barriers to consistent, quality health care.

Marc H. Morial, former mayor of New Orleans, is president and CEO of the National Urban League.

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