

IBM's Diamond Helps Education

Charlotte, NC - An IBM Charlotte employee is coordinating a new program to improve black student achievement in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools with the help of a company-paid Community Service Assignment.

Judy Diamond, marketing support representative in IBM's Financial Services Industry area, heads up the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Urban League's "Education Initiative." The project resulted from a 1987 report of the Urban League task force on education, and intends to address high numbers of black high school dropouts, low black representation in academically gifted programs, and high black enrollment in programs for students said to have educational disabilities.

"Addressing educational needs is something I feel qualified to do, because I started out as a teacher," says Diamond, who has a master's degree in educational administration from Harvard and spent six years as an educator before joining IBM in 1977.

Diamond's job involves administering a program to mobilize the community, improve the educational system, assist students and support academic performance. The Initiative joins other programs in job training, placement services, equal opportunity and teenage pregnancy prevention already offered by the Urban League.

After four months on leave, Diamond has solicited the endorsement of the superintendent of schools; enlisted 60 vol-



Madine Hester Falls, president of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Urban League, (l) with Judy Diamond and materials from the awareness campaign for the Education Initiative.

PHOTO BY NANCY PIERCE

unteers; initiated 30 partnerships with local organizations; developed an advertis-

ing campaign; executed a community awareness program; collected data on existing pro-

grams; and organized a leadership forum. She describes much of her work as "making sales calls" which convince people to help meet educational needs.

The Urban League is obviously satisfied with Diamond's performance.

"IBM's commitment to education and its deployment of Judy Diamond to the Education Initiative are commendable," says Madine Hester Falls, president of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Urban League. "Given our limited resources, we would not have been able to implement this project in a timely manner without her. Judy brings a wealth of knowledge and skills that we will benefit from long after her departure."

IBM's community service assignment program, started in 1971, enables employees to take a paid leave of absence to work for a non-profit, tax-exempt service organization. The leaves usually last about one year. Diamond will return to her IBM office in January after nine months.

One of her most visible efforts, an advertising campaign for the Education Initiative, was launched this month. It includes billboards, broadcast and print media.

"We think kids need to get the word that it's cool to be successful in school," Diamond says. "And parents are learning that they need to be involved and that they need to spend time at school even when there isn't a problem, as a means of prevention."

King Ad Sparks Bruce Lightner Resignation

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commitment to the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

"We have a right to ask the question and he can answer it affirmatively or negatively or counter-punch or whatever he wants to do," Martin said at a news conference.

The Republican governor said the commercial --- one of three his campaign is targeting at black audiences --- demonstrates his commitment to winning a share of the black vote.

"We're not writing off the black vote and we're not going to let the other side take it for granted," Martin said.

The radio commercial, which the Martin campaign is running on 15 black-oriented stations across the state, features a fictitious conversation between sev-



Martin



Jordan

eral blacks about Jordan's refusal to be a member of the King commission.

"I wonder what Bob Jordan has got against Martin Luther King?" one of the people asks.

Martin created the commission after the Legislature voted last year to designate the third Monday in January as a paid state holiday in honor of the

slain civil rights leader. Martin, a Republican, opposed the holiday.

Jordan, a Democrat trying to unseat Martin in the Nov. 8 election, supported the holiday, but refused Martin's offer to chair the new commission.

Martin's radio commercial does not mention his opposition to the holiday, which he said was based on a belief that the state should not create additional holidays. "I do believe in honoring the man," he said.

Jordan's campaign manager, John Crumpler, said the ads showed that Martin believed he had to campaign negatively to win.

"That ad insults the intelligence of the voters, black and white," Crumpler said. "It is misleading, it distorts the record,

it's sleazy."

Jordan refused to join the commission on the advice of Rep. Dan Blue, D-Wake, sponsor of the holiday bill, Crumpler said. "Jordan was not going to be a pawn in Martin's political game."

Martin said the ad wasn't negative but did raise a question about Jordan's consistency, an issue Martin said harks back to Jordan's statement in March that he agreed with blacks on some matters that he wouldn't discuss publicly for fear of alienating "rednecks."

Martin said he saw no reason for his ads to state that he opposed the King holiday. The Jordan campaign is pointing that out, he said.

BPC Decision On Referendum Nearing

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specifics," she said. "If you deal in specifics, then I can get more done as mayor."

The BPC asked for, and received from Myrick's office, an account of the last four city bond referendums to determine how much money went into westside projects. Those figures will help determine the final recommendation, Davis said.

Opposition to the bond package is picking up momentum throughout the westside, with some whites against the referendum, Davis said. Noting that past votes were passed with a coalition of black and white support, Davis said more people are disenchanted with the pros-

pect of rising taxes as the city's bond rating is stretched to the limit.

"If you would take a survey, there would be a strong opposition to (the referendum)," he said.

As the city's ability to pay off the bonds decrease, taxpayers would wind up footing the bill for future referendums.

"If that bond passes, it puts us in hock for the next 20 years," Davis said. "We won't be able to do anything without having to raise taxes."

If organized opposition kills the bond package, Myrick countered, the entire city would suffer.

"We're defeating the whole purpose" of the road bonds, which

are intended to make Charlotte more attractive to new businesses, she said. "If we don't get new industry in, our tax base will shrink, which will put more of a burden on the taxpayer. If we don't build roads, we won't be able to provide jobs where they're needed---in the black community."

Davis said the westside has been passed over in the past and have even been told that their support isn't needed for the referendum's success.

In July, city councilman Stan Campbell was quoted as saying westside opposition "will cost them in the long run."

"Stan said he doesn't need us," Davis said. "We'll see about that."

More Blacks Living In Poverty: Report

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comes for most Americans.

Benjamin Hooks, head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said he was not surprised at the findings on black Americans.

"We have been saying that this is happening, the poverty rate among blacks is sliding upward and family income is sliding down," Hooks said.

Greenstein termed the figures "most disturbing ... The economic recovery is leaving many poor Americans behind."

The news was even worse for black children, noted Greenstein, whose organization studies the effects of government programs on the poor.

The poverty rate for black children aged 18 and under was 45.6 percent last year, up from 43 percent in 1986, the Census report showed.

Nearly half, 49.1 percent, of blacks under age 3 lived below the poverty level in 1987, the study found.

"These new data confirm that the 1980s have been a terrible decade for the poor in America, despite overall progress in unemployment and the economy," said Robert J. Ferish, executive director of the Food Research and Action Center, a non-profit organization seeking to alleviate hunger and poverty.

For Americans overall, the census study said, the poverty rate was down slightly even

though the actual number of poor people increased. That divergence occurred because the population overall increased faster than the number of poor.

The number of persons in poverty totaled 32.5 million in 1987, slightly higher than the 32.4 million reported for 1986. At the same time the nation's poverty rate was reported at 13.5 percent, down from 13.6 percent a year earlier.

Neither change is considered statistically significant because they are both within the margin

of error of the survey, said William P. Butz, associate director of the Census Bureau. The results were based on a sample of about 60,000 households across the nation and had an error margin of less than one percentage point.

The poverty level varies by the size of the family. For 1987 it was \$11,611 for a family of four, up from \$11,203 a year earlier.

Median family income for 1987, the bureau added, was \$30,850, up from \$30,534 the year before.

Cultural Center Has New Goals

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board of directors. "They asked us to develop ideas to increase the quantity and quality of the center's programming." The ideas the team developed were accepted by the board.

"We have many, many more plans," says Greene. Still on the drawing board are proposals to have a sponsorship package; to produce a policy and procedures manual defining the responsibilities of the center's

board of directors and its staff; and to expand the center's hours. Says Greene, "Any reputable center should be open on the weekends."

Greene says that she and others at the center are interested in answering questions from the public concerning the center's programs and exhibits.

She also said that volunteers are needed to help achieve some of the planned goals.

Town Meeting September 11

There will be a "town meeting" sponsored by the Black Elected Officials of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 4 p.m., Sunday, September 11, at Faith CME Church, 457 Wellington St., in the Hidden Valley community.

The purpose of the meeting is to hear reports from the officials and give the citizenry an opportunity to ask questions in order that these officials can be held accountable.

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