

Children suffering

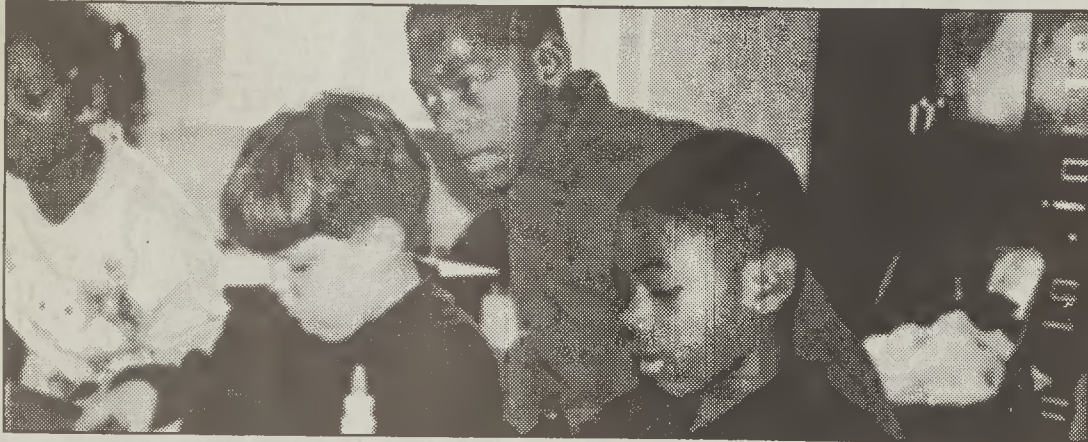
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"We must challenge those who claim that front-end investments in Head Start and child care and immunizations and prenatal care and summer jobs don't work, and demand they prove that higher back-end prison costs, out-of-home care, unemployment and ignorance do," Edelman said.

"We are now the world's leading jailer. Yet fear permeates our psyches, and guns and violence proliferate in our homes and on our streets. The child neglect tax of prisons, police, unemployment, and school failure costs tens of billions of dollars a year.

"A nation that would rather send someone else's child to prison for \$15,496 a year or to an orphanage for over \$36,000 a year than invest in \$300 worth of immunization and \$1,000 worth of prenatal care to give that same child a healthy start, \$4,343 to give that child a year of quality Head Start experience, or \$1,800 to give that child a summer job to learn a work ethic, lacks both family values and common and economic sense."

Children don't lack for advocates at the local level either and numerous programs here are working with our most



needy children.

Despite progress in such areas as infant mortality and teen pregnancy, subjects of intense government action in recent years, much remains to be done in reducing the overall well being of children. Threatened federal budget cutbacks and reorganization of delivery systems put the future of many initiatives in doubt.

The Council for Children, in its fifth annual report on "Children and Violence" gathered statistics showing that the number of children confirmed as abused and neglected is rising. In North Carolina, the reports rose from 25,078 in 1992-93 to 32,110 in 1993-94, that's more than 25 percent. In

Mecklenburg County, the increase was from 5,539 in 1993 to 8,145 in 1994. Those are confirmed cases.

"The consequence of the increasing levels of violence that our children experience in their homes has to be a factor in the increasing violence we see among adolescents," according to the report's introduction. "Our community experienced an explosion in the number of petitions taken out against youths age 16 and under who had committed assault. The numbers went from 486 petitions in 1993 to 1005 in 1994."

The council also preaches prevention: "Charlotte-Mecklenburg must work to prevent children's problems before they begin. This com-

munity must devote sufficient resources to provide families with opportunities for positive nurturing and child development."

The Children's Services Network gave Charlotte-Mecklenburg a grade of C in its rating of children's well-being. The organization reported improvement in such areas as reduction in teen-aged pregnancy, learning readiness, failure to graduate and the number of children in poverty.

The group's report, "A Report on the Future: The well-being of Children in Charlotte-Mecklenburg," worried about increasing abuse and neglect, substance abuse and youth crime.

UNC Charlotte professor Bobbie Rowland recently com-

pleted an evaluation of three programs dealing with young children and reported encouraging results.

The three programs are the UPLIFT program of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, an in-home parenting education program focusing on children aged three and under; the Seigle Avenue Preschool Cooperative, which requires parental participation; and Success by 6/Johnston YMCA, a pioneer family support and community outreach program to link at-risk preschoolers and their families with services.

"One of the most productive components of the whole initiative was the parenting components," Rowland said. "It holds much promise for long-term effect. What we discovered was that the parents made the biggest gains in the locus of control measurement...in taking control of their own lives and their kids' lives. When parents become empowered, then they make decisions that make them very independent and very productive."

Rowland said all three programs were successful. "They began with the basic needs of families, then linked them with services and resources."

"Another biggie was the way the organizations collaborated with each other," she said. "We are finding out that collaboration between grantees, agencies and government gets better services."

"My research tells me it is the culture of the neighborhood that determines the quality of life," Rowland added. "These are very influential components and subsystems."

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Workplace magnets unfair

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too. Dunlap also questioned construction of new schools on the county's outer perimeter. Such schools are difficult to integrate, detractors say.

Two sites presented by the staff for new schools are in southeast Charlotte. One is owned by the county near the York County line and another

is owned by a local developer who plans to build a residential community nearby.

"I personally could not agree to buy land in an area I felt would not be in line with my thinking about integrated schools," Dunlap said. "One piece of property is not worth the foundation of race relations we have built...if we build schools on property knowing no blacks kids are

out there and that we will have to bus black kids out there."

Dunlap and school board vice chair Arthur Griffin say the pupil assignment plan left the incoming board by former Supt. John Murphy need major work. Murphy's plan would almost end racial integration.

"For first time we would be

establishing static attendance zones for all white children and forcing black children to have to be bused across town," Griffin said last month. "It is a one-race pupil assignment plan."

The school board's vote Tuesday means at least the issue of integration and fairness will continue to be part of its discussions as it considers Murphy's plan.

Brookside center had violations, state says

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state regulators, who say they found several major violations, including:

- Uncovered barrels of dirty linen and dirty diapers in both shower rooms
- No functioning telephone for residents' use
- No physician's order or documentation of treatment

and medication administration records for home health clients

- No documentation of tuberculosis testing for residents before or since admission
- Insulin or other medication not administered on time
- Broken equipment that resulted in no glucose monitoring

• Medications administered in inappropriate doses.

Mecklenburg's Department of Social Services, which had made 80 inspection visits over the last three years, twice filed formal recommendations to the state to place Brookside under provisional license status, which would prevent the home from admitting new res-

idents, pending improvement of conditions, or have its license revoked.

Relatives of Brookside residents should call DSS at 336-4812 for help in placing them in other homes. Adult care home operators in North Carolina should call 336-3171 if they can place Brookside residents.

"Make full and constructive use of freedom"

MELODY MICER STEWART

In the spirit of Ma'at



"We must make full and constructive use of the freedom we already possess." The words of Martin Luther King, Jr. are instructive as we continue to address the challenges of blackness in America. "Full and constructive use" means taking advantage of every opportunity for individual and group advancement, from voting to the attainment of higher educa-

tion. It also means active participation in political and economic issues which concern the well-being of the black community. It is not enough to write a yearly charitable check to some deserving black organization; we must be actively engaged in seeking and implementing improvements which benefit the entire race.

It is said that the more things change, the more they stay the same. An honest assessment of the national climate confirms this sad truism. In 1895, 200 blacks left Savannah, Ga. for the African nation of Liberia. Today, there continues to be a slow, but steady migration to the conti-

nent, with African Americans living not only in Liberia, but all over the continent from Ghana to South Africa. Frederick Douglass completed his earthly work in 1895, leaving a legacy we still must learn and emulate. One hundred years later, we need to relearn his dying words, "Agitate, agitate, agitate" and not give up our efforts for equality.

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the doctrine of "separate but equal" in the Plessy v. Ferguson case, ushering in an era of Jim Crow which still lingers today in American endeavors from employment to education, from sports to politics, from health to entrepreneurship. In

1896, 78 blacks were reported lynched, down from 113 the year before. Today, hate crimes are on the rise, culminating in a worldwide investigation of hate group membership in the United States' armed services. The more things change, the more they stay the same...

Making "full and constructive use of the freedoms we already possess" requires that we thoughtfully assess where we have been, learn and internalize the lessons of our history and then formulate plans and act individually and collectively for group empowerment. In other words, in 1996, we must continue to "Agitate, agitate, agitate..."

African Americans appointed to merger committee

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Two African American women were added to the 25-member Charlotte-Mecklenburg County consolidation committee Monday night.

Louise Shackelford, president of the Wilmore Neighborhood Association,

and Mary Maxwell, secretary of the Black Political Caucus, were appointed by Charlotte City Council.

Mayor Pat McCrory was to appoint a third person later. He said last week he will appoint someone from the westside, but not necessarily an African American.

The commission, which will write a charter for a joint city/county government, had

openings following the resignations of three white men. McCrory secured the resignations after resisting efforts to increase the size of the commission to make it more representative.

There are now five African Americans on the commission. Others are Malcolm Graham, Willie Stratford and Jim Ross, appointed by former Mayor Richard Vinroot.

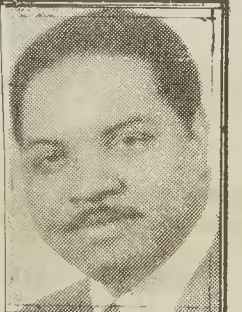
The original commission, appointed by the city council and the Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners, included no westside residents and few African Americans and women.

Twenty-two of the 25 committee members were white, and an equal number were men. Most lived in southeast Charlotte.

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