

The Charlotte Post

VOLUME 21 NO. 28

MARCH 28, 1996

75 CENTS

Charlotte churches not afraid of arsonists

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The rash of arson attacks on southern African American churches hasn't struck the chord of fear among Charlotte congregations, several pastors said this week.

Investigators have linked at least 23 fires at churches in seven southern states, including neighboring South Carolina and Tennessee. Most were set over the past two years and civil rights groups fear they represent a re-emergence of intimidation tactics by white hate groups.

One of two white men arrested in connection with church burnings in Williamsburg and Clarendon counties, in South Carolina, had connections to a Ku Klux Klan faction in Lexington County, S.C. Whites have been charged in connection with several other of the fires.

Federal investigators have begun taking a closer look at the arsons as evidence mounts of a race hate connection.

But Rev. Clifford Jones, pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Charlotte and moderator of the N.C. General Baptist State Convention, said he's not aware of any fires in

North Carolina "that has been traced to any kind of violence or racism."

Jones said he's not heard any other pastor express any fear of possible attacks here. "Arson is one of those things we would rather not talk about or rather not think about," Jones said.

He said the number of attacks elsewhere is higher

than during the '60s.

"Even doing the height and zenith of the civil rights movement, there was not that massive an attack on the Christian church as we have witnessed in the last two or three years, 27 churches burned."

"We have a great deal of empathy with and compassion for those church families that have been devastated by rather sick demonic spirits with so little regard for a building that has been dedicated to the Lord," Jones said.

He said there will be a resolu-



Jones

See CHURCHES page 2A

YMCA withdraws Greenville proposal

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The YMCA has withdrawn a proposal to take over management of Charlotte's Greenville Neighborhood Center.

The city's neighborhood redevelopment office had been discussing the takeover with YMCA officials. But when community residents and others who use Greenville found out about the discussions they wanted to know why they had not been included.

Several speakers told the City Council Monday night they were interested in looking at other alternatives, including Greenville residents taking over the center themselves or maintaining city control.

"Now it's back to the drawing board," said Larry Howard, president of the Greenville Center's advisory board. "Some lady said it came about during a brainstorming session, but when you start implementing a proposal, that's not brainstorming."

Howard said he favors the city running the center. "The city of Charlotte is trying to decide what they are going to do with the building," Howard said. "The city will go back

and ask the community what they would like to do...would get community input. Hopefully they will involve the entire community and not the select few.

"I would think that the city would continue to maintain this building, along with Parks and Recreation, and to support funding for it and the building," he said. "It's taxpayer money. I think the building was put here for a purpose. I hope it will remain."

Tom Sadler, president of the Greenville Homeowners Association said his group is interested in running the center, if the city wants to turn management over to anyone.

At a meeting of the City Council Cities Within A City subcommittee, Don Steger, speaking for YMCA board, said it was "stepping aside," and would no longer pursue a Greenville management agreement.

The YMCA had wanted to use Greenville center as a base to

expand programming in the area between Graham Street and Freedom Drive, south of Interstate 85, similar to programs run out of the Johnson

See YMCA page 3A

VOYAGE INTO HISTORY



Dawn Womack, Spirit Square vice president, with Henrietta Marie plaque. Womack secured exhibit of the slave ship at Spirit Square after local museums turned it down. She has launched a drive to raise \$80,000 to bring the exhibit and accompanying lectures and activities to the Queen City. Exhibit will show this fall in Spirit Square's Knight Gallery.

Spirit Square official spearheads Henrietta Marie drive

By Tammie Tolbert
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Dawn Womack believes people should know their history. Even if it hurts.

Womack, vice president of art and education at Spirit Square, is the driving force behind the Henrietta Marie slave ship exhibit coming to Charlotte. The ship's cargo will be on exhibit at Spirit Square from Nov. 8, 1996 through Jan. 25, 1997. Discovery Place, the Mint Museum, and Museum of the New South all declined to exhibit the Henrietta Marie for various reasons.

"We are still having roundtable discussions about cultural diversity and inclusion and I am thinking 'hey, this is the 21st century, so why are we still talking about multiculturalism, cul-

tural diversity, and inclusion?" Womack said. "This doesn't make any sense."

With today's racial animosities ranging from the opening of a Ku Klux Klan memorabilia shop in South Carolina to the O.J. Simpson verdict, American history needs more exploration, says Womack, who has been at Spirit Square for three years.

"Opening up the paper every day and seeing where acts with blacks and whites are not getting any better, the understanding between blacks and whites is not getting better, and blacks not understanding themselves and denying our past is not getting any better are enough reasons to me to have this exhibit," she said.

The Henrietta Marie's voyage to Charlotte has been choppy, with some venues rejecting the exhibit because of its size or

See WOMACK page 2A

Howell a pillar of support for academic achievement



PHOTO/PAUL WILLIAMS III

Nay Howell leans on "support administrator of year" bronze plaque awarded by the N.C. Association of Educators.

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

It wasn't an Oscar, but the bronze plaque Nay Howell received from her peers recently was just as important as the coveted statuettes handed out in Hollywood.

Howell directs the minority achievement program for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

She labors without the support of some other programs and has to constantly fight and beg for resources.

When the N.C. Association of Educators named her support administrator of the year at its annual convention in Charlotte, it told Howell

someone was watching and appreciated her efforts.

"They validated what I had been doing and what I had been saying," Howell said. "When I found out about having won the local award, I was totally shocked. I did not know I had been nominated."

"Winning the state award was undecidable. When the man called and told me, I screamed. This has encouraged me at a time when I really needed it. The award says other educators are saying 'Nay go on.'"

The NCAE said Howell's "indomitable spirit" was a factor in her being named support administrator of the year. "The Minority Achievement Program she designed, which

looks at the child holistically, and incorporates her "student-centered" approach in helping children succeed has won her numerous community and school accolades and letters of praise," organization leaders said.

Howell, who has worked with scores of community groups on diversity and human relations issues, says her job is to oversee a program which by its very existence tells the school system it is not doing what it should be doing. The program provides academic support for children of color. "Many children are invisible in our school system," she said.

See HOWELL page 3A

Fighting Back waits for foundation's funding decision

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Mecklenburg County's Fighting Back program officials are anxiously awaiting word on whether the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation will continue funding the grassroots anti-drug effort.

The program is about halfway through a five-year \$3 million grant period to provide anti-drug efforts in Charlotte north and westside neighborhoods. Foundation officials came to town last week for a day-long report meeting with city and county officials and Fighting Back partners. The foundation, one of the nation's largest, made the midyear assessment visit to help decide if it will continue funding for the "drug use demand reduction program."

They heard from officials such as Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory and Ann Schrader of the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners, who co-chair Fighting Back's executive board. They also heard from community leaders such as Pastor Gwen Curry of Present Day Ministries on Rozelle's Ferry Road.

"I think Fighting Back should be continued with some new energy and motivation and more internal unity," Curry said. "There programs are necessary."

Present Day Ministries houses Fighting Back's first and only Resource Center, which serves Cluster One. Three other resource centers are planned to serve the four other designated clusters, neighborhood grouped together for concentrated services.

The Cluster Two and Cluster Five center is planned for 1514 N. Tryon St., and was set to open in March. No location has been selected for the Cluster Three center, but the Cluster Four center has been proposed for 2209 Statesville Road. It was set to open this month also.

Curry's ministry, with her husband, Bishop George Curry, already was providing services such feeding programs, drug edu-

See FIGHTING page 6A

Inside

- Editorials 4A-5A
- Community News 3A
- Lifestyles 1B
- Religion 6B
- Arts/Entertainment 9A
- What's Up 13A
- Regional News 8B
- Sports 10B
- Classified 13B

To subscribe, call (704) 376-0496 or FAX (704) 342-2160.
© 1996 The Charlotte Post Publishing Company.

E-mail: charpost@clt.mindspring.com