

Preschool has 1,000 openings

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with young mothers, such as the public housing communities, but others are just the "working poor who cannot afford to send children to day care," Pellin said.

"Some of it has to do with parent in the home, if parents are not getting kids off to a good start...learning. Sometimes children just don't have early developmental experiences."

Pellin said it is a misconception that the program is just for poor black children. It is geared toward all children with inadequate educational, developmental or socialization skills. Students are tested for developmental and socialization needs prior to acceptance into the new program.

School officials are looking for volunteers who can walk through neighborhoods to let parents know about the new

program. Any one who knows of a child who may qualify should inform the child's parent and get them to call the school's preschool 24-hour hotline, 343-5422.

The prekindergarten program is part of Supt. Eric Smith educational initiative that will be launched next school year. A major goal is improved elementary reading skills, which Smith says must start with those preschoolers who need extra help. Smith wants at least 85 of third graders reading at grade level by 2001.

The program will operate prekindergarten classes in nine elementary schools and three prekindergarten centers. The elementary schools are Briarwood, Derita, First Ward, Long Creek, Sharon, Steele Creek, Sterling, University Park, Thomasboro, Sedgfield,

Barringer and Windsor Park. The prekindergarten centers are Plaza Road, 15 classes, and Double Oaks, 25 classes, and Tryon Hills, 20 classes.

Screenings are being conducted at each of the 12 sites, except Double Oaks, which is being renovated. Parents in the Double Oaks area should take their children to Plaza Road or other nearby screening sites. Call the hotline number for exact times for screenings.

The curriculum focuses on language and literacy development; stimulating activities and parental involvement.

Parents interested in enrolling a child must complete an application and the child must undergo screening. The following documents are needed: a certified birth certificate, immunization record, Social Security number and proof of current address.

DA's decision still in the works

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S.C., was later charged with possession of cocaine and possession of a stolen vehicle. No weapons were found in the car, which police learned later was stolen in the Raleigh area.

Gilchrist declined to discuss details of the case.

The officers who fired the shots, Donn Belz, 33, and Shannon Jordan, 25, are members of the David 2 District's street crimes unit. Both officers, who are white, have been assigned administrative duties pending review of the shooting by the police internal affairs division and Gilchrist.

Gilchrist has cleared officers involved in the last two shoot-

ing of unarmed blacks by Charlotte police. In December 1993, Windy Gail Thompson was shot to death by Officer Mark Farmer after her car crashed into a pole at Nations Ford Elementary School. In November, unarmed motorist James Willie Cooper was shot and killed by Officer Michael Marlow.

The City of Charlotte earlier this year paid \$550,000 to Thompson's children.

Police spokesman Keith Bridges said the internal affairs bureau has not seen the criminal file, but will look at it once Gilchrist has made a decision. An internal review will then hold a hearing on the

shooting and determined if any disciplinary action should be taken against the two officers, Bridges said.

Charlotte officers are authorized to fire their weapons when they feel their lives are in jeopardy. The officers said they didn't know a passenger was in the car.

Police carry 40-caliber semi-automatic handguns with 12 rounds of ammunition. The 22 shots fired was all but two of the rounds in the two officers' weapons.

Boetticher family members have begun consulting with attorney James Ferguson, who represents the families of the other shooting victims.

Bills move closer to reality

By Beverly Earle
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The N.C. General Assembly has been in Session since Jan. 29. As of the May 15 deadline, 1,229 bills have been introduced by the House and 1079 by the Senate. It is hard to believe that there are that many new ideas or changes that need to be put into law.

All of the representatives and senators survived the crossover deadline of May 1 without any casualties. Crossover is the date by which all non-appropriation bills must have passed one house and been sent to the other house. The two weeks leading up to crossover were wild. Committees were meeting at 7:30 a.m., late into the p.m., to and three times a day, and just whenever a block of time could be identified. The last two days we were in floor session 10 hours each day and debated approximately 100 bills each session.

Now that the crossover deadline has passed, I will give an update on the status of our local bills. The bills that are still alive and could possibly become law are:

HB309-SB227: Charlotte on-street parking - allows city to issue tickets for overtime parking on city streets

HB342: Mecklenburg bid limit increased - raise the threshold for informal bidding procedure for letting public contracts by county

HB372-SB282: Charlotte towing vehicles - allows city to retain possession of towed vehicles until owner pays towing fee and overdue tickets or post bond

HB433-SB325: Concealed handgun exemption - exempts a sworn current or retired law enforcement officer from training to qualify for concealed handgun permit if applied for within one year of retirement

HB587: Mecklenburg ABC law enforcement - allows county ABC Board to provide its own law enforcement personnel and contract for additional law enforcement services

HB596-SB429: Charlotte Civil Service Board - clarifying language concerning attendance and participation of alternates on Civil Service Board.

HB 612: Charlotte speed limit

authority - allows city director of transportation to set speed limits specified in GS 20-141

HB708-SB556: Charlotte sprinkler systems - regarding sprinkler systems in fraternity and sorority houses

HB712-SB499: Charlotte parking ordinance - authority to Fire Department to ticket parking violations related to a hydrant, fire lanes and stations

SB053: Adult Care/Nursing home penalties - increases fines for critical violations and clarifies procedure

SB304: Day care fraud collections - financial incentive to counties to investigate day care fraud

There were local bills that did not come before the delegation, nor were they a part of the recommendations from the Charlotte elected bodies. Three of these bills deal with the election of the Board of Education and the future education of our African American children.

House Bill 296 - Mecklenburg school election changes, changes the number of at-large members from three to five and changes the term from four years to two.

House Bill 747 - LRC study pupil assignment options, authorizes a study committee to examine options related to pupil assignment, including community-based enrollment.

This committee will discuss and study many options and will probably report a recommendation that is not favorable for our children. Our children are disproportionately bused to

meet everybody's requirement for everything. Obviously, the bill sponsor had second thoughts about HB269, because he later introduced

House Bill 747 - Mecklenburg school elections - this bill has three at-large members, but changes the term to two years. It also provides for a referendum to be held in November 1997. These three pieces were introduced by two Republican legislators from Matthews, Sen. Robert Rucho and Rep. Jim Gulley. It is very important that the African American community closely monitor these three bills. These bills have passed the House by a mostly partisan vote and is in the Senate. It is important that all of the Senators know that this is a local issue and should be decided by the citizens of Mecklenburg County.

Sen. Charlie Dannelly and I serve on the standing Aging Study Commission. We introduced companion bills (one in the House and one in the Senate) that increase the penalties for rest home and nursing home neglect and abuse.

The Senate has put together their recommendation for the state budget. This budget bill was passed to the House for concurrence. Of course the House does not concur, we will put together a budget also.

BEVERLY EARLE of Charlotte is a member of the N.C. House of Representatives.

Four Army sergeants charged

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charges are one count each of rape and sodomy. His lawyer, Capt. Arthur J. Coulter, said Robinson plans to plead not guilty today on all counts. If convicted of rape, Robinson could be sentenced to life in prison.

"It's depressing," said Robinson, who is married. "But it's not because I am afraid. I am still smart. I still have a heart. I am still who I am. Everything is in the hands of God."

Robinson and Gamble were drill sergeants in the 16th Ordnance Battalion, one of two training battalions at the scandal-plagued Ordnance Center and School at Aberdeen.

Four drill sergeants and a classroom instructor in the 16th were charged with sex crimes. Staff Sgt. William C. Howard, another drill instructor in the 16th, told Army investigators in September that three of the four accused drill sergeants - Gamble, Robinson and Staff Sgt. Marvin Kelley - were part of a "game" in which drill sergeants passed around trainees for sex.

Gamble is charged with 32 counts, including one count of desertion. The charges involve 14 trainees.

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