



Get your party on in '98...One of Fly's spies ran into WCNC news maven **Bea Thompson** recently. Thompson, who celebrated 20 years as one of Charlotte's premier reporters this year, was supposed to be feted at some star studded anniversary shindig. But alas and alack, Fly didn't get an invite and everybody we flew into was wondering what happened. But fear not, for the party is still on. Bea will be honored at a big function sometime in late April and proceeds will benefit Brisbane Academy.



Thompson

• While Fly will miss **First Night Charlotte** and **SpringFest**, the city will have at least one festival: **West Charlotte Fest**. Organizers assure Fly's spies that there are no plans to cancel, delay or otherwise shut down the party that has been held downtown the last two years.

Swats: In addition to the regular buzz around Charlotte, Fly is introducing a new feature, Swats, that points out less than exemplary behavior.

• Swats to...**The Public Library of Charlotte-Mecklenburg**. Its new public service announcements feature prominent Charlotteans like Hugh McColl, Parks Helms and Mayor Pat McCrory extolling the virtues of the written word. Problem is, few of them are black or female. If you didn't know better, folks might think the only people reading in Mecklenburg County are white guys. If the library is trying to increase the number of people checking out books, the least they could do is diversify the lineup.

• Swats to...**Charlotte Monopoly**. The Charlotte version of the popular Parker Brothers lists several prominent locations and institutions of note. Instead of the Boardwalk and Park Place, there's the Taj McColl, also known as NationsBank, Ericsson Stadium, better known as the place where the Carolina Panthers used to play good football and First Union. But there's nothing of color on the board. No Johnson C. Smith University, A.M.E. Zion Publishing House, Afro-American Cultural Center or anything.

According to press stuff that came with the game, the game was commissioned by the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, the people charged with selling all of Charlotte to the outside world. Or is that just everything east of Trade Street and I-77?

• Swats to...**Time** magazine, which has managed to upset some local activists by drawing parallels between the Million Woman March and a gathering of animals.

The magazine, in its Nov. 10 edition, published a cartoon parody called the Million Pet March in which dogs, fish and cats descend on St. Louis, the home of Ralston-Purina. The pets promise to be more receptive to their "family's needs" by curbing their "incessant barking...furniture clawing...messy molting" and overeating.

"What we've done has been compared to animals," said one MWM participant from Charlotte.

## UNC reviews diversity on campus

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She called for the review of campus admissions and financial aid policies in response to court rulings striking down racial preferences.

She said she stands behind the centerpiece of UNC's long-fought desegregation agreement with the federal government — scholarships designed to bring more black students to historically white campuses and more white students to historically black campuses — but worries that some individual campus programs may be vulnerable to lawsuits.

Minority enrollment at UNC's 10 historically white campuses is 9.84 percent, and blacks make up nearly 22 percent of the overall state population.

Broad said she wants to continue to improve the numbers, but not with policies that may be unconstitutional.

"We have an enviable and proud record in equalizing educational opportunity in outreach and recruitment and student aid," she said. "Our goal will be to sustain that successful track record and indeed to expand it. But it is also our responsibility to take this kind of review in light of so many challenges in the courts."

Federal courts have stricken a scholarship program for top black undergraduates at the University of Maryland, and race-based admissions and financial aid policies at the University of Texas.

The rulings, along with California's 209, have prompted universities across the nation to

review policies, Broad said.

But some complain that Broad's review is premature and that UNC should wait until the U.S. Supreme Court takes up affirmative action before changing successful programs.

"The message it sends to students of color and women is that UNC doesn't care anymore — we're not going to wait for it to come here, we're just going to do it," said Ali Fischer.

Some faculty and administrators have similar fears.

"I am fearful that we will engage in wholesale retreat from actions designed to make society more equal and open without knowing what we're retreating to," said Archie Ervin, the director of recruitment for UNC-CH.

UNC-CH Chancellor Michael

Hooker, however, said he agrees with Broad's review of programs, and he believes Connerly's visit can only help the discussion.

"There needs to be a public debate so there will be a public understanding of the arguments pro and con," Hooker said. "I welcome anything that heightens the intellectual climate on campus, and any kind of debate does — as long as its done with civility."

## EZ Rider rolls through Charlotte

By John Minter  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

A 25-cent per ride bus service for trips to shop, visit doctors or hospitals and to jobs is available in many west and north Charlotte neighborhoods.

Charlotte has expanded its EZ Rider transportation system, which provides hourly van service in City Within A City areas.

The four EZ Rider routes are in addition to Charlotte Transit routes, which cost \$1 per ride and generally operate between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays. Some Saturday service is available.

The service, begun in 1994, provides direct connections for north and west Charlotte residents to nearby work sites, shopping areas, human service agencies and recreation centers.

It began after requests from organizations such as "Success by Six" and the Amay James/West Boulevard Task Force for low-cost, neighborhood-based bus service in inner city communities.

EZ Rider routes run through neighborhoods and then stop at specific locations.

Three of four riders use the service for shopping trips and over 50 percent use it to get medical care. Eighty-five percent used bus transportation before EZ Rider.

The routes now serve Jackson Park, Revolution Park, Bancroft and Norris streets, and Beatties Ford Road, providing transportation to Carolinas Medical Center, Presbyterian Hospital, Midtown Square and Central Piedmont Community College.

Other destinations include the Food Lion on Beatties Ford Road near LaSalle Street, the Northpark Mall on Eastway Drive and the Park 'N Shop on North Tryon Street.

EZ Rider has also provided free transportation to neighborhood groups, such as Project Hope and the Johnston Memorial YMCA, and for special events sponsored by city and county departments.

The bus service is run by the



PHOTO/JOHN ALLEN

The EZ Rider transportation system is expanding in west and north Charlotte. The system also provides a van service in the City Within A City area.

city's Department of Transportation, which contracts with a private firm to run the bus routes.

## Race summit tries to start dialogue

Continued from page 1A

have all the answers. I've had to become willing to work with other people with different points of view to try to find solutions."

Ferguson hopes that others of the 550 people expected to attend the race conference Sunday and Monday at the Charlotte Convention Center will come away with similar feelings.

Named "Building Community: Something Has Begun," the conference will feature speeches by national figures, but about half the time will be spent in conversation at tables of about 10 people.

Members of as several racial, ethnic and economic groups have been invited to make the gathering as diverse as possible.

To attend, participants had to fill out an application and be accepted. Organizers sought diversity in making selections. Efforts were made to include members of the media, identified as a key influence in race matters during more than a dozen focus groups held over the past six months.

The conference, for which more than \$380,000 was raised and spent, began early this year with a call from Parks Helms, chairman of the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners, and former TransAmerica Reinsurance Co. president Bill Simms.

Helms called for a race conference in his 1997 State of the County address. Simms did so after angry blacks spoke out at a Charlotte City Council meeting.

The calls were spurred at least partly by tensions in the wake of a fatal police shooting of Willie James Cooper, an unarmed motorist, in November 1996. The shooting unveiled lingering racial tension and misunderstanding.

As the nation grappled with issues such as busing and affirmative action, whites and blacks often found themselves on opposite sides. Other ethnic groups often find themselves in the middle or on the bottom.

Charlotte's increasing diversity has heightened some of those concerns at schools, in neighborhoods and the workplace.

President Clinton has appointed a racial advisory board, includ-

ing noted black historian and Duke University professor John Hope Franklin as chairman. Gov. Jim Hunt sponsored a race conference in Charlotte in the wake of black church burnings and other hate crimes.

Dozens of other cities have sponsored community conferences on race, but Charlotte's unique approach sparked an article in Monday's USA Today by White House correspondent Bill Nichols.

The Charlotte conference was organized by the Foundation For The Carolinas, with Dianne English of Mecklenburg Ministries as executive director. Family counselor Don Taylor is her assistant.

Taylor said about 80 percent of those attending will be black or white, about 40 percent each. The remainder will be a mix of Native American, Asian and Hispanic, he said.

About half the participants will be women.

"There's a long waiting list," Taylor said. "That's gratifying. There are a lot of people out there that want an opportunity to talk and a lot of people who want things to be different."

Charlotte's summit will begin Sunday afternoon with an introduction by Ferguson and an interactive presentation by national diversity consultant Elsie Cross.

Cross heads an organizational development consulting firm headquartered in Philadelphia and is recognized for her work in managing diversity.

The conference will also receive a detailed look at just how diverse Charlotte is and some of the issues within the community.

On Monday, Hugh Price, chairman of the National Urban League, will speak. Also addressing the group will be NationsBank executive Joe Martin, winner of several local humanitarian awards.

Between the speeches and presentations, participants will share their views on race among those at their table. Such conversations will consume about half of their time. A facilitator will make sure the conversations are

recorded.

People on the waiting list can attend the general sessions, though they will not participate in the conversations, according to Taylor.

Ferguson said the goal is not to solve race issues, but to perhaps develop strategies for attacking the problem.

"I hope everybody comes away from the conference understanding what has to be done," he said. "More importantly, I hope everybody comes from the conference with renewed commitment to solve the problem of race. Solutions are there, but they are not quick and easy."

Ferguson said it's possible another conference will be necessary.

"It's too soon to say whether it will become annual or regularized, but recognizing that we can't solve the problem in one sitting, it will be necessary to have more conversations and to involve more people in conversations about race. Just how often we have to have a community wide dialogue I can't say right now."

The conference has its skeptics and Ferguson and other organizers realize the event will be closely watched and perhaps criticized if it does not meet community expectations.

Ferguson said dealing with the problem is a step which must be taken.

"I feel like we have already had some success because we have moved the whole issue of race to the front burner. The people involved thus far are all committed to seeing it go forward. We are over subscribed for the conference."

"I think Charlotte can be a leader in this effort...and create a model for how a community can come together and talk about race and out of that dialogue develop some actions plans," Ferguson said. "The conference will produce the direction and plan of action. We don't have any predetermined outcomes."

For more information about the race conference contact the Community Building Task Force at 333-2595.

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