

**WON'T COST NOTHING**

"Love Don't Cost A Thing" a tired urban remake of 1980s teen comedy/1D

Christina Milian and Nick Cannon



**CHRISTMAS TALE**

Should parents push the idea of Santa Claus/1B

it's not the birds and bees, but a tough call to make anyway



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THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 18-22, 2003

## New players, old frictions challenge school board

First pupil assignment vote signal shifting of power, priorities

By Cheris F. Hodges and Herbert L. White  
 THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board has new members and a lingering problem: Delivering a clear-cut vision for N.C. largest public school district.

The new board's first act last week was to reverse a student assignment decision voted by the previous board

dealing with the student assignment plan. The board approved a change to the student assignment plan that would modify the current Lansdowne Elementary School boundary to allow a small area (Mays Chapel Lane, Gardner Lane, Brookfield Place, and Summer Darby Lane) to have Elizabeth Lane as a home school. That area will feed to South Charlotte Middle and Providence High instead of McClintock Middle

and East Mecklenburg High.

Vice Chair Kit Cramer said she voted for the change because it was what Superintendent James Pughsley wanted. Although the item was not on the agenda, Cramer said board members should debate issues when necessary.

"The superintendent said this was a decision that needed to be made. Please see CMS BOARD/6A



Cramer

## Charlotte misses on N.C. jobs package

Legislature votes to send tax breaks to Triangle and Triad

By Cynthia Dean  
 THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

RALEIGH - The Charlotte region missed out on North Carolina's job stimulus package.

Merck, one of the nation's largest pharmaceutical companies, will offer 200 jobs with a starting salary of \$55,000 a year at Treyburn Corporate Park in Durham.

In a special legislative session called by Gov. Mike Easley Dec. 9, the General Assembly approved spending \$24 million to lure Merck to the northern Durham industrial park.

Legislators also voted tax breaks for R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.'s wishes that would add about 800 jobs in the Winston-Salem area.

Rep. Bernard Allen, D-Wake, said he felt the bill was an effective piece of legislation because it stimulates economic growth.

"Anytime we have jobs coming to North Carolina, I'm for it," he said. "I think we did the right thing. I commend the Department of Commerce and the governor for getting Merck to come here."

Members of the Legislature took a five day tour throughout the state, making 35 stops along the way. The lawmakers attended town hall meetings where residents discussed their most pressing needs.

Please see CHARLOTTE/3A



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Earl Worth, who has worked as Santa in the Charlotte area since 1997, has been unable to find work this holiday season. His

inability to portray jolly Saint Nick robs African American kids of a chance to interact with someone who looks like them.

## Last hired: Prospects dim for this Saint Nick

By Cheris F. Hodges  
 FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

In a time when many people are having a hard time finding a job, this time of year, Santa is the last person who many would expect to find in the unemployment line.

But for one Charlotte Santa, that is where it seems that he will be spending Christmas.

It isn't shaping up to be a Merry Christmas for Earl Worth, an African American Santa.

He has been donning a red suit since 1997. But Worth says he can't find a job this year.

Worth got his start at the Outlet Market in Fort Mill.

"It was great," he said of his first Santa gig. "The parents and the kids were excited. The black

parents wanted this."

Worth said it is important for children to see a Santa that looks like them. He was hired at big discount stores and parties. "Black Santa" was a hit. When Worth plays Santa, he comes with his own photographer so that children can have a memory of the day.

But, Worth said, things changed last year.

He didn't get called for parties or at several stores or malls. "All these major stores where black people shop won't hire me," Worth said. "It's because I'm black."

Worth said he has tried to get work at several stores and malls with no avail. He even tried to get on at Eastland Mall, he said, a diverse shopping area in East

Please see WORK/2A

## Support of black voters no sure thing for Dean

By Hazel Trice Edney  
 NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON - Although Democratic presidential front-runner Howard Dean has received several key endorsements, including one from former Vice President Al Gore, he does not have a lock on the black vote, political analysts say.

"If Dean reaches out to the rank and file, when he reaches out to grass roots African-Americans by addressing the issues, by asking for their support, then Howard Dean will have a leg up in the race," says Donna Brazile, Gore's former campaign manager. "In terms of the black vote, I think the black vote is up for grabs."

Gore's endorsement of Dean at the National Black Theatre's Institute for Action Arts in Harlem last week, caps several important endorsements, including those by Congressmen Bobby Scott (D-Va.), Major Owens (D-N.Y.), and Jesse Jackson Jr., (D-Ill.); the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); and the Service

Please see AFRICAN AMERICAN/6A

## Proposed hospital puts focus on children's health

By Herbert L. White  
 herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Carolinas HealthCare System wants to build a children's hospital that would boost pediatric care in the Charlotte region.

The planned \$85 million, 11-story hospital would be built on the campus of Carolinas Medical Center. CHS's board of directors has approved construction plans. A certificate of

need application will be filed Jan. 15 with the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and a decision is anticipated later next year. The new hospital will be named Levine Children's Hospital, and would open in 2007. When completed it will encompass 230 beds including 53 existing neonatal intensive care nursery beds.

"With an influx of more than

95,000 children expected in the area over the next 10 years, providing a child- and family-centered facility will be vital to keep pace with the growing need in our region," said James E.S. Hynes, chairman of the CHS board.

The hospital is the largest single capital expenditure in Carolinas HealthCare System history. The hospital is named in honor of Sandra and Leon

Levine, who gave \$10 million through The Leon Levine Foundation. The remainder will be funded through Carolinas HealthCare Foundation, and Carolinas HealthCare System.

"Sandra and I believe ardently that children are our community's most important asset," said Leon Levine, founder of the Family Dollar

Please see PROPOSED/2A

**INSIDE**

- Editorials 4A
- Weather 8A
- Life 1B
- Religion 8B
- Sports 1C
- Real Estate 5C
- Business 8C
- A&E 1D
- Classified 4D

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