MLK CONTEST

Charlotte-Mecklenburg students give voice and vision - **1B**

Drawing by Porscha Brown of Crestdale Middle School

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The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

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WEEK OF JANUARY 15-21, 2004

Black vote critical to success in S. Carolina

Democratic hopefuls need it to win primary

By Artellia Burch
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Endorsements from Al Gore and other Democratic heavyweights have made Howard Dean an early favorite for the party's nomination.

Dean

But will that sway South Carolina voters?

The Palmetto State's Feb. 3 primary can either propel a candidate after the early tests in Iowa and New Hampshire or add another nail into flagging bids for the nomination.

"This election in South Carolina will allow people to see if the Democrats have a candidate that can appeal to the people in the South," said Scott Huffman, Ph.D., political science professor at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, S.C. "South Carolina will more than likely go to (President) Bush. But if a candidate can appeal to South Carolina voters, he may be able to pick up some states in the South. For a Democratic candidate to win the presidency, they have to crack the South.

"In 1992 the Democrats had Bill Clinton, a candidate that could win in the South. And look – he won the presidency.".

Sharon Powers, a registered Republican, says there isn't a Democrat she can identify with.

Please see **WOOING**/2A

Equity activists want schools to boost achievement

By Herbert L. White
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Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools ranking as one of America's best urban districts doesn't impress black activists.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg NAACP and Black Political Caucus of Mecklenburg are scheduled to hold a press conference today at 12:30 p.m. to challenge CMS to improve achievement levels for inner city and poor students. The event was pushed back from Tuesday to coincide with Martin Luther King's birthday, said the Rev. Dwayne Collins, a member of the NAACP's Education Committee.

WSOC-TV news connection

Charlotte-Mecklenburg outperformed all urban districts in the U.S. and nine states in the National Assessment of Educational Progress for fourth- and eighth-grader, according to the U.S. Department of Education. But members of both groups say the ranking is hollow because black students are far behind whites in reading and math.

"When we look at it, does it say we accept mediocrity and not being the best we can be?" Collins asked. "In our opinion, that's nothing to be excited about."

Neighborhood activist Richard McElrath echoed that sentiment in a December e-mail after CMS's results were announced.

Please see **ACTIVISTS**/3A

HOW 'BOUT THEM PANTHERS

PHOTOS/WADE NASH

Carolina Panthers linebacker Will Witherspoon gets a grip on St. Louis Rams running back Marshall Faulk during the Panthers' 29-23 double-overtime win in the NFC Divisional playoff game last week in St. Louis. The Panthers play Philadelphia for a chance at the Super Bowl.

Playoff success gives fans a reason to scratch 7-year itch

By Cheris Hodges
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Charlotte has become Panthers country. Try finding a parking spot in uptown Charlotte during a Panthers playoff game, you might have better luck finding Osama bin Laden.

Now the Cardiac Cats are one game out of the Super Bowl and fans are gearing up to celebrate the Panthers, second NFC Championship Game appearance in it,s nine year existence.

Carolina Panthers merchandise is flying off the racks at the Team Store in Ericsson Stadium.

"The whole season has been busy," said Margaret Britt, the store manager. "Last week we had a lot of people come in saying they were going to St. Louis. I hadn't heard anyone say they were going to Philadelphia. Maybe they,re saving for the Super Bowl."

Viella Mason of Gastonia (front, third from left) partied with husband Bobby and Panthers defensive end Mike Rucker's family in St. Louis. Hundreds of Panthers faithful made the St. Louis trip.

Panthers fan Viella Mason of Gastonia made the trek to St. Louis last weekend -- decked out in her Panthers shirt and black hat with blue feather boa – to watch the Panthers win a game no one but die-hard fans thought they would. But in true Carolina fashion, the Panthers took the game into overtime, not once, but twice. And Mason said it was exciting

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FORMER CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR

Rembert to campaign for commissioner

By Herbert L. White
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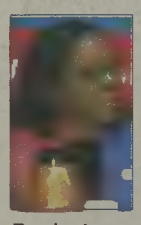
Two months after losing her seat on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board, Wilhelmenia Rembert is making a political comeback.

Rembert, a former school board chair, will announce Friday her intentions to run for an at-large seat on the Mecklenburg board of commissioners. She finished fourth in November's school board campaign, one spot away from re-election.



Rembert

Rembert, a registered Democrat will face similar challenges in the commissioners race. Low voter turnout and a relative lack of support in Charlotte's mostly-black precincts doomed Rembert's campaign. In the 15 largest precincts, she tallied 4,599 votes out of a potential 28, 567 available. Combined with a strong turnout in the suburbs for more conservative candidates Joe White and Kaye McGarry and moderate Kit Cramer was also a factor.

Black incumbents have fared poorly in recent at-large commissioners races. In 2002, District 3 commissioner Darrel Williams was edged out of an at-large seat. In 2000, the late Jim Richardson lost despite being an at-large incumbent.

Republicans hold a 5-4 advantage on the county board.

JAMES PEELER
1929-2004

FILE PHOTO

Photographer James Peeler, who chronicled life in black Charlotte for more than 40 years, died last week at age 74.

Photos captured essence of Charlotte

By Herbert L. White
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James Peeler was at his best when holding a camera.

A dean of black photographers in the southeast, Mr. Peeler died Jan. 9 after an brief illness. He was buried Wednesday at Beatties Ford Memorial Gardens.

Mr. Peeler, 74, saw Charlotte at its best and worst during the height of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s when his work appeared in Baltimore's Afro-American, one of the top black-oriented newspapers in the U.S. He covered the sit-ins in Charlotte as well as Rock Hill, S.C., chronicling the sacrifices of African American protesters in the face of white – and sometimes black – resistance. He also photographed Charlotte's social and sports scenes for The Post.

"I was deeply saddened to learn about Mr. Peeler's death," Post Publisher Gerald Johnson said. "He had a long and storied history with this publication during my father's (Bill Johnson) tenure. The collection of his photos tells a remarkable story about African American life in Charlotte in years gone by. Mr. Peeler was a great photographer, but more importantly he was a great man. He will be missed."

But Mr. Peeler's reputation was cemented as a mentor to other photographers. When it came to learning the ropes about the marketing of photos, he was the master.

"When I first came to town in '81, I made a point to meet the black photographers to see what was going on in the market," said Calvin Ferguson, a freelance photographer whose work

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