



HEALTHY ATTITUDE

Charlotte's Ray Durham (right) back from injury to help Giants/1C

LIFE OF THE PARTY

Myrtle Williams takes pride in being innovative event planner/8C

Myrtle Williams (left) is owner of Simply Unique Designs



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District 40 rivals gather star power

Graham, Odom seek party's most influential names

By Herbert L. White
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The name game has started in N.C. Senate District 40.

Democrats Malcolm Graham and Fountain Odom are lining up some of Charlotte's best-known political and social activists for a run at their party's nomination.

The goal is simple — raise money. "It's all about money," said T e d Arrington PhD., chairman of UNC

Charlotte's political science department. "Voters don't care about names. It's a psychological game and a money game."

Both candidates have a Who's Who of support. Graham's backers include longtime party operative Bob Davis; former Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board chairman Arthur Griffin; current schools chair Joe White and City Council colleagues Nancy Carter and Susan Burgess.

"The supporters in my campaign are people who make a difference in the community," Graham said.

Odom's list, prominently displayed on his campaign Web site, has heavy hitters, too: Mecklenburg District Attorney Peter Gilchrist; entrepreneur Cammie Harris; Mecklenburg County Commissioner Norman Mitchell and city council members James Mitchell and Patrick Cannon.

It's no coincidence that both camps boast a large number of black supporters. District 40 is overwhelmingly black — 60 percent — and Democratic. The winner of the tentatively scheduled July 20 primary will be a

Please see SENATE/7A



Gloria Varner makes a point last week during a meeting to discuss after-school alternatives for teens. Husband Wendell Varner is on the left holding grandson Realon Morrison.

Rice's reversal of fortunes on 9-11



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO

National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, who has testified privately before a panel investigating the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington, has President Bush's OK to speak in public and under oath.

Public testimony calculated to blunt administration's critics

By Jennifer Loven
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice will testify publicly and under oath before an independent panel investigating the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks after all.

The White House has also agreed that President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney would answer questions —

together, in private — before the entire commission.

The turnabout reflected administration concern that the president's strongest point with voters — his leadership in the war on terror — could be eroded if the high-publicity dispute over Rice's testimony lingered.

"I've ordered this level of cooperation because I consider it necessary to gaining a complete pic-

ture of the months and years that preceded the murder of our fellow citizens on Sept. 11, 2001," Bush said.

"Our nation must never forget the loss or the lessons of September the 11th, and we must never assume that the danger has passed," he said in short remarks in the White House briefing room. He took no questions.

Please see RICE/8A

Rwanda releases 4,500 prisoners

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

At least 4,500 common law prisoners were pardoned and released in Rwanda on Monday in a bid to decongest the nation's prisons, Prosecutor General Jean de Dieu Mucyo told IRIN.

"This group of the released exclude those who have confessed to genocide crimes," he

said on Monday.

Those released included the elderly and the sick, as well as those who had been in prison longer than the sentences they could face. Mucyo said those who confessed to participating in the 1994 genocide, in which some 800,000 Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus were killed, would probably be released next week.

The released prisoners are to be sent to "solidarity camps" for two months where they will undergo re-education in the government's new programs on reconciliation and on the workings of the Gacaca traditional courts that are to try alleged genocide perpetrators.

Mucyo said 200 minors aged 14 to 18 years, among those

Please see PRISONERS/2A

Neighbors want options for teens

By Cheris F. Hodges
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Rather than making teens feel like criminals, one Charlotte couple wants to create an after school and weekend program that will give children an alternative to hanging out in the street and at local malls.

While much of the talk from police and mall offi-

cials, following what has been described as a near riot at Eastland Mall, has been about curbing the number of teens hanging out at the mall and the transit center in uptown Charlotte, some people in the community are looking to provide teens with another option.

Gloria and Wendell Varner are co-owners of Kiddie Farm, a day care center that

has been in business for 18 years. Gloria Varner says some of the teens involved in the recent melee at Eastland could be children that passed through her day care center years ago.

"It makes me wonder where did we go wrong," she said. Varner said day care centers were able to keep children longer, there would

Please see NEIGHBORS/3A

Can arrest benefit anti-crime crusade?

Barnett hopes 'stunt' will renew interest

By Herbert L. White
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Now that the Rev. James Barnett has Charlotte's attention, he's pushing for a reduction in violence in its communities.

Barnett, founder of Stop The Killing, was arrested last month and charged with soliciting for prostitution, insists it was a "stunt" to test police presence in the Wilkinson Boulevard area. Although his activity was fodder for water cooler conversation and radio talk shows, Barnett sees a silver lining: it brought attention to his cause.

"The thing I want to do is keep them talking," he said. "What the white media is talking about doesn't really impact what's going on in our communities in terms of drugs and violence."

Stop The Killing's latest campaign is to track Charlotte's homicide rate for the first three months and reduce it. In March, four murders were recorded, compared to seven the same time last year.

"We want to end this quarter with fewer murders than last quarter as it relates to drugs and violence," he said.

Barnett said the anti-violence campaign will try to push its message through black-oriented media outlets, especially urban radio stations. Results

Please see CRUSADE/7A

Author of Bobcats owner bio leaves Charlotte off tour

By Herbert L. White
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A national book tour touting a biography on Charlotte Bobcats owner Bob Johnson won't be coming to Charlotte.

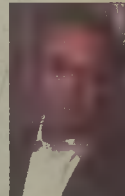
Brett Pulley, author of "The Billion Dollar BET: Robert Johnson and The Inside Story of Black Entertainment Television," will launch a seven-city tour Monday in New York City. Allowing for big-league markets like Los Angeles and Washington, why Springfield, Mass., instead of Charlotte, where Johnson owns an NBA franchise?

Pulley, a senior editor at Forbes magazine "is doing interviews with Charlotte radio stations," said Lissa Mariel Brown, a publicist at John Wiley & Sons, which is publishing the book. "We didn't put (Charlotte) on there because of time constraints, plus he still has his commitments to Forbes."

The biography, which Johnson declined to be interviewed for, details how he launched BET as well as accounts of his business practices and sometimes-stormy personal relationships. A Bobcats spokesman said no one there had heard of "The Billion Dollar BET," which debuts in bookstores April 7.



Barnett



Pulley

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