



From the moment fans enter Charlotte Bobcats Arena, staff are drilled in making their experience a memorable one.

# At Bobcats Arena, goal is good time for customers

By David Dawson  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Long time season ticket holders Frank and Wendy Rosen were in awe of the new Charlotte Bobcats Arena. However, they were wowed by the exceptional customer service at Bobcats' basketball games. "The people are all around saying

'Welcome to the Charlotte Bobcats Arena'. They do make you feel welcomed there. They do it with a smile and you know they mean it," said Mrs. Rosen.

That's sweet music to Marlene Hendricks, director of guest services at the Arena. Hendricks, who joined the Bobcats after six years with the

Miami Heat in the same capacity, lives and breathes a WOW philosophy to customer service. As the creator of the philosophy and training program for arena employees that stand for Welcome guests; Offer assistance; Wear a warm and friendly smile.

See ARENA/7C

# BofA closes \$3.5 billion deal for MBNA Corp.

By Natalie Gott  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH - Bank of America Corp. completed its acquisition of MBNA Corp. on Sunday in a deal worth about \$34.2 billion, the nation's second-largest bank said.

Charlotte-based Bank of America now has 40 million active credit card accounts on its ledger, making it one of the leading worldwide payments-services companies and issuers of credit, debit and prepaid cards.

"Today marks the start of an exciting new era for Bank of America in credit cards," said Kenneth D. Lewis, chairman and chief executive officer.

MBNA is the leader in so-called affinity marketing with its relationships with organizations ranging from the National Football League to L.L. Bean and hundreds of medical organizations.

The acquisition has raised concerns in Maine, where MBNA has about 3,000 employees, with 2,000 of them in the Belfast area, making it among the state's top 10 employers. Besides Belfast, MBNA has call centers in Portland, Brunswick, Farmington, Orono, Presque Isle and Fort Kent.

It's not known what the impact of the merger will be in Maine.

Under terms of the agreement announced June 30, shareholders of Wilmington, Del.-based MBNA will receive 0.5009 common shares of Bank of America plus \$4.125 in cash for each of their shares.

Bank of America plans to eliminate 6,000 jobs across both companies, which the Charlotte-based bank has said will help it achieve overall cost savings of \$850 million by 2007.

Before the deal, MBNA had about 28,000 employees overall. Bank of America had more than 177,000 employees.

In 2004, Bank of America acquired FleetBoston Financial for \$48 billion.

# Chevron fights allegations of environment, rights abuses

By Terence Chea  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO - A young boy holds out a deformed hand. A woman is missing a lower leg that was amputated to remove a tumor. A gaunt middle-aged man lays in a hammock dying of stomach cancer.

The haunting images displayed in a photo exhibit at San Francisco City Hall claim to document the devastating effects of more than three decades of oil extraction in Ecuador's Amazon rainforest.

Humberto Piaguaje came to help launch the exhibit and seek justice from the powerful petroleum company he blames for sickening his people and poisoning his homeland. He's one of 30,000 plaintiffs in a class-action lawsuit that alleges San Ramon-based Chevron Corp. failed to clean up billions of gallons of toxic waste dumped in pristine rainforest in Ecuador, where a lengthy trial is under way.

"We've lived there for thousands of years, and we've never had diseases like this before," Piaguaje, a leader of Ecuador's Secoya tribe, said in Spanish. "We want Chevron to do a true cleanup of the areas they contaminated."

Chevron, one of the world's largest oil companies, has denied human rights and environmental violations in the 180 countries where it operates, but allegations of abuse threaten its public image

See CHEVRON/7C



PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Travis Faye of the Charlotte Krunk goes up for a basket during a November game at Cricket Arena. The American Basketball Association franchise suspended operations last month due to financial instability among other ABA teams.

# Airball for minor league

## American Basketball Association's woes shutter Charlotte team

By C. Jemal Horton  
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Ten games into its inaugural season, the Charlotte Krunk professional basketball team has suspended operations, according to the team's president and co-owner.

Duane "Spyder" Hughes told The Post that the financial woes of other teams in the American Basketball Association caused repeated scheduling conflicts and, ultimately, led to economic difficulties for the Krunk, leaving him no choice but to

shut down the organization.

Hughes said the move already has cost him and his fiancé, Krunk co-owner Lisa Dillard, "well over \$160,000" - and things could get worse if he cannot reach a favorable settlement with Cricket Arena, which was slated to host all the team's home games this season.

"At this point, I don't think there's going to be another ABA game played in Charlotte this season," Hughes, a former rap star in 1980s, said in a telephone inter-

view from his Atlanta home.

"It's been the strangest set of circumstances. Every other team in our division had already folded, and we were the last of the Mohicans. We had a certain business model and knew it was going to take X amount of dollars to field a team for the entire season. That's why I had concerts scheduled at our games, because I knew basketball, on its own, in a major-league setting, wasn't going to be able to maintain

See BASKETBALL/7C

# South Carolina rings in the new year by discarding minibottles

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The year 2005 wasn't the only thing being toasted away in South Carolina. Partygoers and bar owners finally said good riddance to the minibottle.

For 22 years, South Carolina law required bartenders to use the tiny 1.7-ounce bottles most often associated with airplanes and hotel minibars.

Then, last year, South Carolinians voted the minibottles out, and lawmakers followed through earlier this year by approving regulations

to give bars and restaurants the choice to pour from the big bottles starting Jan. 1.

With the law change, the state's method for taxing liquor sales changed, too. South Carolina collected 25 cents for every minibottle sold, now, it will charge 5 percent on every drink.

"I thought it was going to be us - South Carolina - and the airplanes forever," said Matthew Andrade, celebrating with a Red Bull and vodka poured from a liter bottle at Rookie's

See SOUTH/7C

