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# BUSINESS

## MICROSOFT

### Software giant reaches out to U.S. students

SPECIAL TO THE POST

Microsoft Corp. and Blacks @ Microsoft hosted the 15th annual BAM Minority Student Day in six U.S. cities, including Charlotte.

Bill Gates, Microsoft chairman and chief software architect, was the featured keynote speaker at Microsoft's Redmond, Wash., headquarters on Feb. 10. His remarks to students from the Microsoft campus were broadcast live to high schools across the country.

"Activities such as the BAM Minority Student Day are part of a larger Microsoft effort to provide urban high school students with exposure to the real-life experience of working in the high technology industry," said Jeff Raikes, president of the Microsoft Business Division at Microsoft. "Through the event, we also hope to inspire young minority students to become the information technology leaders of tomorrow."

During the BAM Minority Student Day, participating Microsoft campuses provided area high school students from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds an opportunity to tour Microsoft facilities and learn about the high-technology tools, resources and career opportunities. Students were given an inside look at technology through games, projects, tours, hands-on technology labs, information sessions and Microsoft product demonstrations. Microsoft employees also serve as mentors, helping students learn about career options in the technology industry.

"The BAM Minority Student Day is a tremendous opportunity for students to learn about exciting internships and career opportunities in the computer science industry, as well as engage with a BAM mentor," said Claudette Whiting, general manager of Global Diversity and Inclusion at Microsoft.

Blacks @ Microsoft was founded in 1989 and serves as a company-sponsored diversity organization dedicated to supporting the continued growth and development of African-American employees at Microsoft Corp.

## OLD SCHOOL COMEBACK

### Today's digital shutterbugs look beyond the usual 4x6-inch prints

By Ben Dobbin  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROCHESTER, N.Y. - In the brave new digital-photography age, cherished pictures of pets, landscapes and loved ones are showing up in unusual places - on swimming pool tiles, furniture and even tombstones.

As digital cameras find their way into more than half of America's homes, one old habit has taken hold again: Most people now send their digital pictures out to be developed rather than print them at home. And they don't just order 4-by-6-inch snapshots at the corner pharmacy.

In the lucrative print business, the number of digital and film images converted into conventional prints has been slipping since 2000 and could dip another 5 percent to 25 billion this year, according to Photo Marketing Association International, a trade group whose annual convention opens Feb. 26 in Orlando, Fla.

Overall revenues are rising, however, as alternatives blossom, from putting computer reproductions of images onto posters, postage stamps and postcards to T-shirts, chairs, wallpaper and bronze plaques.

"Images are no longer good enough in a frame on the wall," said Mitch Robison, 46,

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## BofA vendor forum brings small companies, corporations together

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

Earlier this month, Bank of America hosted about 1,000 representatives of its vendor community for its first Supply Chain Management Forum. Representatives from corporations like IBM, Microsoft, Compass and Pitney Bowes met entrepreneurs from minority and women-owned businesses who are also bank vendors.

The forum had two goals: provide a platform for BofA to connect small and large companies with each other and explain today's regulatory terrain.

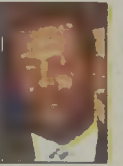
"It was important for all our vendors to get their information at one time," said Greg Taylor, BofA's supply chain management executive said. "We're making sure everyone understands why we do business the way we do."

The two-day forum was the biggest sponsored by Charlotte-based Bank of America for vendors, Taylor said. Unlike previous gatherings, this year's forum combined smaller meetings into a more comprehensive information session. The response was good enough to convince bank officials to replicate the program.

"It was a long effort, it took 6-8 months to put together," Taylor said. "We

think we had 900-1,000 people there and had them in for two days. The feedback was so strong and positive, we're looking forward to going forward with this again next year."

Bank of America spends more than \$12 billion a year with suppliers across the country and more than 10 percent of that spend is with minority and women-owned businesses. The bank's goal



Taylor

See BOFA8C

## CHARLOTTE BOBCATS



PHOTO: CURTIS WILSON

Charlotte Bobcats Arena WOW ambassador John Jackson (right, with Charlotte Sting head coach Muggsy Bogues) sports the new outfit for arena personnel. The shirts were designed by Cary Mitchell, a Johnson C. Smith University graduate.

### Designer outfits arena corps



By Ellison Clary  
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

About 450 Charlotte Bobcats Arena staffers are stylin' these days, thanks to uniform shirts designed by suit-maker to the stars Cary Mitchell.

"I was going for a relaxed look, one that would be attractive on any body type and for both sexes and a range of ages," said Mitchell, the Charlotte custom-tailor who helped design the Bobcats uniforms.

Mitchell

counts Emeka Okafor of the Charlotte Bobcats among his custom clothing clients along with Alonzo Mourning of the Miami Heat. He's also done trousers for golf superstar Tiger Woods.

Arena greeters, hosts and ticket-takers have worn their new pullovers in both long- and short-sleeves for a couple of weeks and most enjoy them, said Charlotte Bobcats spokesperson Jamie Banks. One style features blue and white vertical stripes and another is solid blue with a black vertical stripe down each side. Each incorporates only a bit of Bobcat blue and orange, since staffers work all arena events, not just NBA games.

Mitchell credits Barry Silberman, chief operating officer for Charlotte Bobcats Arena, for deciding the staff should have uniform shirts to go with their khaki pants. "It's my design, but Barry's idea," Mitchell said.

"We tweaked Cary's design concept a little ourselves," Silberman said.



Mitchell

## Debra Lee takes charge at BET

By Janice Rhoshalle Littejohn  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES - Debra Lee never expected it would come to this.

Twenty years after she decided to leave an elite Washington D.C. law firm to manage contract negotiations and legal affairs for a little-known, black-owned cable company, Lee is now chairman and CEO of Black Entertainment Television - the most prosperous African-American business in the country.

"I felt like I was getting off the fast track," she says of joining the company in 1986, "but it was for something I believed

in."

Last month, the 51-year-old Lee succeeded Black Entertainment Television founder Robert Johnson as head of the multibillion dollar media empire, becoming the highest ranking African-American female executive at BET's parent company, Viacom, Inc.

Lee sat down for a breakfast interview recently at the elegant Four Seasons Hotel, ending a hectic week of press conferences and corporate meetings. Dressed stylishly but simply in black slacks, white cotton shirt and a leather jacket, the divorced mother of two sounded almost matter-of-fact when discussing her new BET role.

"Well, I've been doing it for the past 10 years as chief operating officer," said Lee, who has guided much of the channel's

growth in ratings, viewership and revenue, even while overseeing the construction of BET's new corporate headquarters in Washington D.C.

Lee was instrumental in taking BET public on the New York Stock Exchange in 1991 and again in 2000, when Viacom purchased the network for \$3 billion.

While the channel's primary focus continues to be music programming, Lee also has pushed for BET original movies, documentaries, standup comedy shows, concerts, special events, and news and information shows.

And she's led the company in its franchise development, which now consists of BET Event Productions, BET.com, and music channel spinoffs

See DEBRA.8C

## Blackberry patent feud may be at an end

By Stephanie Stoughton  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RICHMOND, Va. - Say what you want about patent infringement suits, but at least the BlackBerry case has drama.

A federal judge, clearly impatient with the long-running case, could issue an injunction soon on U.S. sales and service of the wireless e-mail device.

Most patent suits are dismissed or settled long before they reach this stage. Remarkably, neither BlackBerry maker Research In Motion Ltd. nor tiny patent holder NTP Inc. have shown signs of backing down. In effect, they're daring each other to blink first and settle.

Governments, businesses and individual users are growing unnerved by the standoff. Although the odds of an actual shutdown are low, conflicting opinions about the possible outcomes and the spin from both sides have created a confusing picture.

James R. Spencer, a no-nonsense U.S. district judge widely respected in the legal community, now finds himself in the unusual position of weighing an injunction against RIM even as the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is expected to finally rescind NTP's patents.

"These patents are ... guaranteed to go in the garbage," James Balsillie, co-chief executive of Canada's RIM, said in December. "At the end of the day, our position is real simple: Let the system work."

Unfortunately for Balsillie, the system doesn't necessarily work in a timely fashion. Spencer has signaled that he is unwilling to delay his proceedings while awaiting final word from the patent office, which lags far behind the court system. A case that could change the practice of granting injunctions in patent cases, eBay Inc. v. MercExchange, will be taken up by the Supreme Court, but no decision is expected until the spring at the earliest. Spencer, meanwhile, has scheduled a hearing for Feb. 24 on the injunction and damages.

Because patent infringement cases don't often rise to this level of importance and even fewer make it this far in the courts, it's hard to tell how Spencer will rule. An injunction he once issued on a sediment-control device, for instance, interested few people outside the construction industry.

