



Students commit to make positive changes



Members of Males Committed to Change and coordinator Starkie Sharp (third from left) walk on the South Mecklenburg High School campus. The club encourages young African Americans to succeed academically and socially. Chapters are also on the campuses of Vance and Myers Park high schools

PHOTO: CURTIS WILSON

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through the cracks, we want to encourage them."

The club, which is known as MC2 (as in MC squared) meets once a month to cover club agendas, go on college field trips, gather at South Meck sporting events to support the school's athletic teams, and occasionally meet for fellowship.

Men at First Baptist Church have also helped the African American students at South Meck, by organizing some of the club's functions.

"The young men over at First Baptist set up programs for them to participate in every first and third Saturday," Sharpe said. "They try to hold activities that promote unity." One of those activities was a recent college field trip to South Carolina State University, where the young men got to explore college life first hand.

John McMichael, the club president, said Males Committed to Change is sorely needed at South Meck, even though there are chapters at Vance and Myers Park high schools.

"Here we're like a minority, there's no clubs for us, all they think we can do is play sports, that's it," McMichael said. "This club helps prepare us for college, I'm going to North Carolina A&T to major in Mechanical Engineering."

Having a club to call their own is very important to students like Keith Faulkner, the club secretary.

"It's made a pretty big change in the way I approach school," Faulkner said. "You see young guys that you go to school with and you try to focus their energies on doing something positive."

Treasurer Donte Williams agreed.

"It helps further ourselves in school so we won't be out doing random things," he said. "We've done tutorials to get some people's grades up. We did something like a grade sheet and you don't want to get called out in front of your friends so it's kind of a competition." The club does have a firm standard that its members must adhere to. Every young man who becomes a member of MC2 must maintain a 2.5 grade point average.

The sheer numbers of the group is encouraging to Vice President Terrell Partlow, as he looks back over the success of the club during the 2005-06 school year.

"Having more than five people coming together, having a big group of people has stuck out in my mind, the bonding has really stuck out in my mind," Partlow said. "Next year I'd like to see more programs held by us to raise money to go on another trip or something."



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Unity, economics on agenda at N.C. Legislative Day

By Cynthia Dean

THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

RALEIGH — People of color had their say at North Carolina's capitol.

The first People of Color Legislative Day was held May 23 at the Legislative Building. The POC is made up of the North Carolina NAACP Branch, the N.C. Association of Community Development Corporations, the Triangle Urban League, the Women of Color Coalition and other grassroots organizations participating in the joint effort.

Organizers deemed the day a success with an estimate of about 350 participants. Many attendees met early that Tuesday morning at First Baptist Church on Wilmington Street and then marched to the Legislative Building.

A press conference was held, where NAACP President Rev. William Barbour laid out the major points of the agenda.

The six priority topics were: housing and economic development, criminal and economic justice, education, health care, voting rights and violence against women.

One of the most discussed issues was raising the state's minimum wage and securing a living wage. The group supports raising the minimum wage to \$6. They ultimately want to see a living wage with regular increases tied to an inflation index.

Barbour said a living wage is a framework to improve the quality of life for all people.

House member Jean Farmer Butterfield (D-Edgecombe County) told participants that she supports what they support.

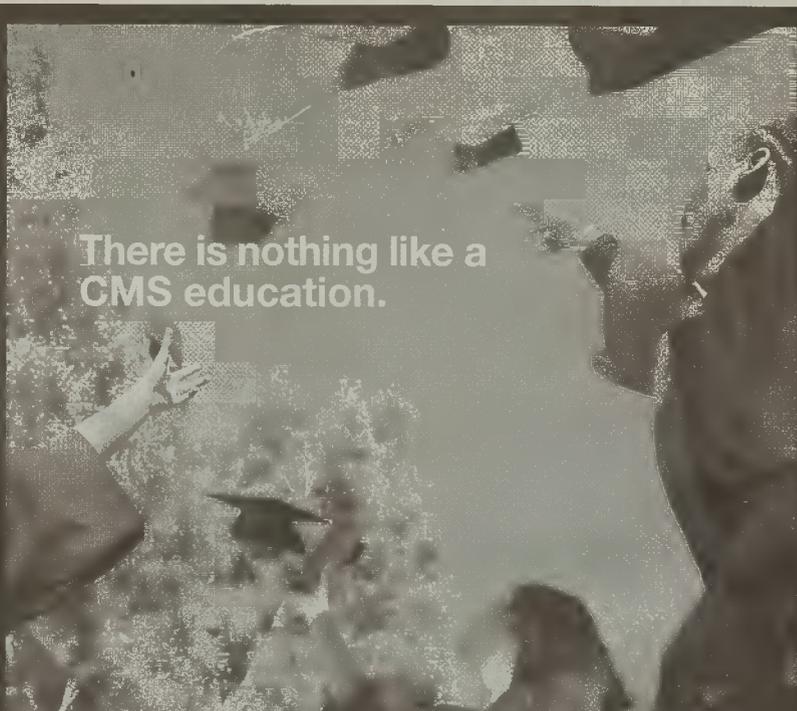
"It (wage increase) is good for the worker, the employer and for the economy," Butterfield said. "A fair day's pay for a fair day's work."

In the area of education, the coalition wants full funding of the Leandro Court decision that mandates the state to fund all underachieving schools. The court decision concludes that all children in North Carolina deserve a quality education provided by the public school system.

POC members endorse House Bill 529 that places a two-year moratorium on all executions until further studies about the process are completed.

Concerning the issue of voting rights, the coalition hopes to see its legislative representatives vote in favor of House Bill 851. The bill enacts a same-day registration law that permits a person who misses the registration cutoff date to go to a one-stop voting precinct. The group also requests that more state dollars go toward assisting victims of domestic violence, including education and prevention programs.

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