

The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

Serving Cabarrus

WEEK OF JANUARY 4-10 2007

Adding fashionable tweaks can make your wardrobe sizzle/1B



ALL THAT JAZZ
Saxophonist Walter Beasley keeps lofty perch by reinventing/1D



KEEP AN EYE ON THIS GUY
Stock car racer Marc Davis will be among athletes to watch in 2007/1C



Watt hands over gavel to Caucus

By Herbert L. White
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U.S. Rep. Mel Watt is happy to step away from the glare of chairing the Congressional Black Caucus.

"You better believe it," said the Charlotte Democrat, whose two-year term ends today. "I'm happy to get back to real citizenship."

The last two years have been a whirlwind for Watt.

As CBC chair, he's articulated the caucus' position on issues ranging from genocide in Sudan to the federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina. Foremost, he said, was focusing the CBC's mission as the representative of African American issues in Congress. "I think we had some accomplishments," he said. "We tightened the CBC's agenda so we understood what our objectives were and allied groups understood our agenda."

With Rep. Carolyn Kilpatrick (D-Mich.) taking over as chair, the CBC faces a new challenge. With Democrats in control of Congress, Watt said he'll urge his colleagues to stick to the caucus' values, even if it conflicts with the party's.

"Our biggest challenge will be not to get so aligned with the Democratic Party that we become an extension of the Democratic Party," he said. We shouldn't lose sight that there is a separate black agenda from the Democratic agenda."

Watt led the panel to the dawn of Democratic control of Congress. Although Democrats were out of power, the caucus opposed tax cuts for the richest Americans while championing affirmative action programs.

"Did we close any disparities? Unfortunately, no because of the policies of (the Bush) administration," Watt said. "The disparities have moved in the wrong directions."

There were some successes, Watt said. Much of a CBC-sponsored bill to rebuild the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina was adopted by the House and signed into law by President Bush. The Voting Rights Act was extended. And the arrest of caucus members helped bring attention to the humanitarian crisis and genocide in Sudan, an east Africa nation.

"I think we've had successes," he said. "It's been a whirlwind two years. It's like all these things have just merged together. It's been a heck of an experience."



FILE PHOTO/ALVIN FERGUSON

HEALTH CARE 31 percent of racial minorities don't have health insurance in Mecklenburg County, compared to 8 percent of whites.

Disparities in a county of plenty

Organizers see town hall meeting as opportunity for African Americans to address solutions to racial inequities in Mecklenburg

By Erica Singleton
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST
N.C. Sen. Malcolm Graham openly marvels at Charlotte's rapid growth.

He also sees its underside, which often puts African Americans lagging in health care, education and economic viability.

"When you look at the community, it's growing at a dazzling rate," said Graham, co-chair of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg African American Agenda, which is hosting a town hall meeting on racial disparities this weekend. "African Americans are trying to keep

with the growth, yet we're losing in all categories — housing rates, unemployment rates, students test scores. We need to come together. We need to cooperate. How can we make a better tomorrow...how can we address these disparities?"

Hundreds of African Americans will converge on the Charlotte Convention Center for the town hall meeting Friday and Saturday. The event will bring together community activists and speakers of varied backgrounds and opinions to discuss local disparities in quality of life issues. Organizers hope to develop an agenda to address the gaps that exist between blacks and whites.

Please see AGENDA/2A

ECONOMICS AND FINANCE



FILE PHOTO/ALVIN FERGUSON

Three-quarters of white Mecklenburg families own their home; less than half of African American families do.



FILE PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

In 2005, 46.4 percent of black students who started high school in 2001 graduated. However, 24.8 percent had dropped out and 23.9 percent left the district.

EDUCATION

Program's aim: Put men into classroom

Initiative launched in S.C. targets elementary and secondary schools

By K. Chandler
THE WESTSIDE GAZETTE

Increasingly, education advocates from around the country are pointing to a direct correlation between the egregiously disproportionate prison statistics of black males today, along with the dearth of young black American males who are successfully completing college, and the fact that only 2.4 percent of this nation's 3 million elementary and secondary public school teachers are black men.

In an effort to change that bedeviling situation, the Call Me MISTER program — named in honor of actor Sidney Poitier's memorable line, "Call me Mr. Tibbs" in the 1970 hit movie, *In the Heat of the Night* — was established in 1999 by four South Carolina colleges: historically black Claflin University and Morris and Benedict College as well as majority-white Clemson University.

The Call Me MISTER program, which is short for Men Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models, was designed to recruit, train and assist black men academically and financially in obtaining South Carolina teaching certification in order to exert a positive influence on young black males and respond to the critical need for more black men teachers in the state's marginally performing schools.

"Although inspired by the Hollywood movie version, in terms of the development of the Call Me MISTER program we recognize that our legacy comes from the fact that

Please see PROGRAM/2A

thebox NEWS, NOTES & TRENDS Thin's in for Post in 2007

Out with the old, in with the slim. Starting next week, The Charlotte Post will publish a narrower newspaper in response to the rising cost of newsprint. This week's paper is 11.625 inches wide by 21.5 inches tall. The new layout will be 10.875 inches by 21.5.

To accommodate the adjustment, The Post will institute changes in design that should maintain our current level of articles and photographs with minimal disruption to readers.

Instead of passing on the rising cost of newsprint to readers, newspapers around the country are going narrow. The management of The Charlotte Post considers that to be sound policy as well, and we're interested in your feedback. Feel free to call me at (704) 376-0496 or e-mail herb.white@thecharlottepost.com.



HERBERT L. WHITE



Jobs-training program graduates ready to launch careers/6C

INSIDE

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Religion 4B

Sports 1C
Business 6C

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