UNDER THE 'HAT

Natalie Wilson takes on role of Mary McLeod Bethune/5B



Shauntae Barnette and Harold Jordan win Essence magazine contest/3B



IDO. I WILL



similarities brought Dwain and Lucrisha Hudson together/1B

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JAMES B. DUM CHARLOTTE he Charlotte 3

The Voice of the Black Community

Also serving Cabar

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Johnson C. Smith University cheerleader Alsha Lide, a senior from Charlotte (right) leads the Golden Bulls mens' basketball tean onto the floor before a Feb. 15 game against CIAA rival Livingstone College. Next week's CIAA basketball tournament is expect ed to pump more than \$15 million into the Charlotte economy.

Ready for fun and games

Charlotte organizers and businesses look to improve on CIAA tournament

Tournament more than hoops to fans

By Cheris F. Hodges

The Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association has a lifelong fan in Edward Cook of Durham. But this year's tournament is going to be bittersweet for the North Carolina Central University graduate.

"This is the last year for my alma mater in the CIAA," he said.

While Cook is happy for the Please see FANS/2A

By Herbert L. White

heb whiel@thechotollepost.com
The welcome mat's out for
the most ambitious CIAA basketball tournament ever.
Next week's tournament at
Charlotte Bobcats Arena will
bring more fan-friendly
events, star-studded parties
and education-oriented activities than last year, which drew
a record 155,000 visitors
Uptown. Going into the 2006
tournament, skeptics wontournament, skeptics won-dered whether Charlotte could match previous host Raleigh's success. This year, the ques-

to improve on CIAA
tion is can Charlotte top itself.
"I think our stiffest competition is ourselves," said Bill
McMillan, director of marketing and business development at the
Charlotte Sports
Commission
and co-chair of
the CIAA local
or gan 1 zing
committee. "We
want to do better than we did. As a community, we want to top ourselves."

By fans' reaction, Charlotte's first CIAA tournament was a winner. Charlotte Bobcats Arena and the Convention Center scored high marks for accessibility and programming in a questionnaires completed by visitors. Charlotte traffic, and parking in particular, were a concern to some. Everything was open to review.

We had our first planning meeting after last year's tour nament," McMillan said "We've enhanced some things

Please see EXPERIENCE/2A

6 We want to do better than we did. As a community, we

want to top ourselves. 🥫 Charlotte Sports Commission marketing director Bill McMillan

Obama responds to critics in South Carolina

U.S. senator says he can win in 2008

By Jim Davenport

ORANGEBURG, S.C. - White House hopeful Barack Obama, taking a fellow black lawmak-er to task, said Saturday voters are ready to elect a black pres-

'At every turn in our history, "At every turn in our history, there's been somebody who said we cant," the Democratic senator from Illinois told a nearly all-black audience of about 2,000 at Claffin University.

"Some people said we can't do this, we can't do that, so we shouldn't even try. If I have your support, if I have your energy and involvement and

commitment and ideas, then I'm here to tell you, 'Yes we

The comments drew the

The comments drew the loudest ovation during a question-and-answer session in his first campaign swing through South Carolina, an early voting state.

The first-in-the-South contest here is seen as a test of candidates' abilities to reach black voters. Half of the state's Democratic primary voters are black. voters are black.

Obama responded to comments this past week by Democratic state Sen. Robert

Please see OBAMA/3A



U.S. Sen. and presidential candidate Barack Obama (D-III.) makes a point during a campaign visit at Claflin College in Orangeburg, S.C., Saturday.

Top this: Charlotte best U.S. city for black families

By Herbert L. White

Charlotte's the place for black amilies to settle, according to a

families to settle, according to a national survey. BET.com ranked Charlotte the best city in America for African American families, outdistanc-ing Columbus Ohio and Washington, D.C. The worst?

Cleveland, Ohio.

Cleveland, Ohio.
Charlotte's economic
strength, coupled with the academic growth of local colleges,
booming business community
and social scene impressed
researchers. Charlotte's
improved efforts to recruit
young professionals and 50
percent home ownership

among blacks were also noted.

"Along with learning which areas of the country are more conducive to black families, the Best Cities study helps explore family issues in a cultural and political context," said Retha Hill, BET Interactive's vice president of content. "We hope the results will spark ideas and

inspire positive conversations within the black community."

Researchers examined 22 cities across the U.S., including Atlanta, Boston, Los Angeles and Philadelphia. Criteria included economics, education and crime.

On the Net:

www.bet.com

More N.C. eens are

Study: Smoking cessation programs gaining ground

By Herbert L. White

Fewer young North Carolinians are lighting

up.
Cigarette use by high school and middle school students has significantly declined since the state began funding tobaccouse prevention and cessation initiatives for teens, according to a survey by UNC-Chapel Hill researchers.

according to a survey by UNC-Chapel Hill researchers.

Cigarette use dropped 25 percent among high school students and 38 percent by middle school students from 2003-05, according to the report. The decline appears related to the statewide tobacco use prevention and cessation initiatives, researchers said.

The evaluation was authorized by the Teen Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation initiative of the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund. The fund was established with North Carolina's share of tobacco lawsuit settlement money. The report also details how the initiative affects youth of different ages, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, activities led to those effects and ways to improve outcomes in the next few years.

"Our data shows that the Health and Wellness Teen Initiative, as the first statefunded effort and one that is highly successful over the last three years, has allowed political leaders, policy-makers, parents and youth themselves to recognize and more successfully deal with the health effects of tobacco,"

Please see ANTI-SMOKING/6A

thebox

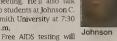
NEWS, NOTES & TRENDS

Magic leads HIV town hall meeting

By Herbert L. White

Know your HIV status?
Basketball hall of farmer Magic
Johnson will host a town hall meeting
on HIV and AIDS Feb. 28 at 6 p.m. Little
Rock AME Zion Church, 401 N.
McDowell St. The meeting is frea as part of Johnson's "I Stand With Magic:
Campaign to End Black AIDS.:
The campaign's goal is to slash the rate of new HIV infections among
African Americans in
half over the next five years. Johnson will lead
the discussion himself
during the town hall
meeting. He'll also talk
to students at Johnson C.
Smith University at 7:30
p.m.

Free AIDS testing will



be conducted at Regional HIV/AIDS Consortium, Rast Independence Blvd., Suite 105 March I from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. and March 2 at Metrolina AIDS Project, 127 Scaleybark Road from 4-8 p.m.



To win the CIAA basketball title, contenders need role players to step up/1C

Life 1B Religion 5B

Sports 1C Business

A&E 1D Classified 4D



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