

# Initiatives aim to improve access, equity

**Continued from page 1A**  
Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee Johnson C. Smith University, and Microsoft Corporation.

"This brings into play one of the important aspects of Crossroads. Organizations are doing work important to the organizations, but they are doing it in a collaboration with other organizations, which brings a sort of mutual accountability," English said. "What we're hoping in this learning network is that these organizations will encourage and challenge each other."

As they announced their initiative, each person carried or wore a sign asking, "What can YOU do?"

"I was at a conference last week, where they said a community is shaped and defined by the questions it asks itself," English said. "These stories and processes are intended to incite responses and actions. What that does is set the stage for going out into the larger community and engaging networks, or neighborhoods, or groups and smaller organizations. Working within your sphere of influence and finding out what you can do."

What the 15 groups decided on range from increasing access to cultural programs to inspiring people to use their position to advocate for economic justice.

The Arts & Science Council of Charlotte-Mecklenburg pledged to increase programming through an investment strategy in cultural institutions, programs and creative individuals. The initial efforts will focus on racially/ethnically diverse communities, low-income neighborhoods, artists and emerging cultural organizations across the county. Two such creative talents are Douglas Turner Ward, and Quentin Talley, writer and director of "A Day of Absence," at the Afro American Cultural Center beginning May 10.

The Asian Chamber of Commerce will try to bridge Eastern and Western cultures with events like its Dragon Boat Festival.

Microsoft partnered with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools teachers and students to increase computer competency at middle schools. In addition they've been working in Southwest Middle School assisting students on site since January.

Bank of America is also partnering with CMS with two initiatives aimed at ensuring "students of CMS today are more prepared to contribute to Charlotte's success tomorrow."

Also focused on students are Central Piedmont Community College and the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County which have combined forces to increase literacy levels throughout the County. "Research shows that 75 percent of all children who cannot read by the end of first grade never catch up with their peers. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 1 in 5 adults are considered functionally illiterate," said Patrice Ebert of the Public Library. "By coordinating literacy programs, we will move the community toward a more positive future as we address inequalities in economic and social status."

CRC worked with a group of community volunteers to create Community Theater/Theater about Community, a production that premieres May 16 at 8 p.m. at CPCC's Pease Auditorium.

Crisis Assistance Ministry will focus on increasing awareness of challenges facing the poor, and encouraging community solutions.

Levine Museum of the New South, funded by Bank of America, will host a long-term exhibition of the exhibit "Courage: The Carolina Story that Changed America," which tells the story of the citizens of Clarendon County, S.C. who brought the first lawsuit against segregation in public schools. The case later evolved into Brown v. Board of Education, which outlawed school segregation in 1954.

Mecklenburg Ministries launched Friday Friends, an initiative to identify 500 people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds

to commit to becoming lunch partners. The ministry has already signed 340 people.

"They agree to eat lunch once a month for six months to get to know each other on a deeper level, as people, not as categories. Friday Friends invites people to cross the road and build a friendship together," said Maria Hanlin.

UNC Charlotte launched a Crossroads Charlotte-centered curriculum as part of their general education program, and has plans to expand courses offered within the specialized program.

Wachovia is assisting through its MoneySmart and BorrowSmart programs to increase home and business ownership support and community development.

WTVI's "Hometown Stories" builds race and community relations with a series of documentaries about the history and life of ethnic communities in the area. WTVI also partnered with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg African American Agenda, videotaping its final report on public policy and community initiatives for broadcast.

YWCA Central Carolinas is launching Adopt-A-Site,

where youth development centers serving at risk 5-15 year olds enter into a formal partnership to provide human and financial resources, beginning with two Mecklenburg County sites in late spring/early summer. Once fully implemented, all 12 YWCA sites will be adopted.

Johnson C. Smith University will expand its Saturday Academy program and introduce programs for middle school students and the Talented Males initiative.

"We started in 1999, specifically for Thomasboro Elementary," said Angela Jeter, director of the Crossroads Program at JCSU. The program also includes Merry Oaks, Bruns Avenue, Hickory Grove and Paw Creek Elementary. "We offer tutoring in reading writing and math [for at-risk students in grades 3-5]." The Talented Males program will also work with students in these schools and grades, but targeting those who are performing at or above grade level.

"As we look at access, even though we are an HBCU, sometimes we are viewed as the tower behind the gate," Jeter said. "By bringing these kids and par-

ents, onto campus, we expose them. For some of these parents this is the very first time they've ever stepped foot on a college campus."

Crossroads Charlotte includes more than 35 orga-

nizations, with 20 organizations still to announce their initiatives.

On the Net: [www.crossroadscharlotte.org](http://www.crossroadscharlotte.org).

**SPRING IS HERE...**




**Free Estimates • Certified Collision Repair  
Insurance Assists • No Appointment Needed**

**PowerPak Paint Special:**

Reg. \$499.95  
**NOW \$250\***

**Includes: Imperial Paint Service  
Extra Prep & Full Clear Coat  
2 yr warranty**

\*With this ad, some vehicles may be slightly more.  
Offer expires 5-31-07.

**5625 N. Sharon Amity Rd. • 704.535.6015**

## U.S. businesses keep food from Africans

**Continued from page 1A**

"We are stressing the need to improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of food aid."

Zambia in particular is in an emergency situation, as over half a million people are on the verge of starvation if the U.N. World Food Program runs out of its already dwindling food rations.

If U.S. aid dollars could buy food directly from Zambia's food reserves, it would boost the local economy and save time and money in the process of delivering food to people.

Rising shipping, transportation and logistical costs have been taking an ever larger share out of the \$2 billion in annual spending on food aid in recent years, contributing to a 43 percent decline in the amount of food delivered over the past five years, the G.A.O. found.

As a result, the United States is feeding about 70 million people a year instead of the more than 90 million it fed five years ago.

Arkansas Senator Blanche Lincoln, at a recent hearing, defended the U.S. current practice. "If you want to see safe, affordable and abundant food supply in the United States, somebody's got to stand up for our growers."

## D.C. moves closer to voting representative

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON - The U.S. House has voted 241-177 to pass the D.C. Voting Rights Act, a bill that would give Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton or her successor a vote in the House for the first time in history.

The vote came last week after more than 5,000 marched on the Nation's Capitol on the District's Emancipation Day, demanding democracy for the city, which pays taxes and sends people to war.

Norton can only sit in full congressional sessions, she can vote in committee, but not on the House floor. The passage by the House is the closest the Voting Rights bill has gotten to passage since the 1970s.

Members of the House

Judiciary Committee that initially examined the bill and passed it to the House floor had predicted fairly easy passage in the House. But, a battle is expected in the Senate and President Bush has indicated he might veto. Even if it passes muster with the Senate and White House, some believe it will end up in court because the Constitution calls for states to have a vote in Congress.

Nevertheless, the battle in the 57 percent black District is a fight of principle, says voting advocates.

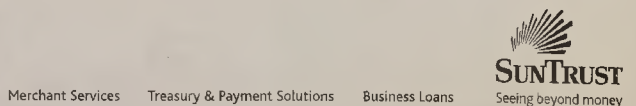
"The United States is the only representative democracy that does not afford the citizens of its capital voting representation," says House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer.



## You multi-task. Shouldn't your business checking?

Finally, everything you need from a business checking account — for free.\* Introducing Integrated Business Checking, only from SunTrust. It's Free Business Checking, plus Free Personal Checking with free Bill Pay, and free Check Cards for each account, all managed in a single view through SunTrust's exclusive Online Cash Manager. It's the best business banking in the business, and it just got better.

Call 800.259.5730, stop by your local SunTrust branch, or visit [suntrust.com/bizbanking](http://suntrust.com/bizbanking) for more information.



\*There are fees for exceeding stated transactions, cash processing, and night bags. Refer to the fee schedule for details. Online Cash Manager and Online Cash Manager Plus are not intended for use by commercial or institutional clients, which in general are defined as companies with annual sales in excess of \$10 million. SunTrust's Online Cash Manager Premium and Online Treasury Manager have a complete host of web-based services designed to meet your online banking needs. Please call 877.230.5108 for additional information. You must have or open a business checking account to be eligible to enroll in an Online Cash Manager product. Transaction and service fees may apply. SunTrust Bank, Member FDIC. ©2007 SunTrust Banks, Inc. SunTrust and Seeing beyond money are federally registered service marks of SunTrust Banks, Inc.