

# Community leaders find transportation for welfare recipients

Statewide community representatives met during Hunt's Work First Forum.

BY MATT DEES  
STAFF WRITER

Community leaders are taking the highroad to help out the state's welfare recipients.

Over 500 community leaders from around the state met Tuesday for the Work First Forum, which was sponsored by Gov. Jim Hunt.

"We hope to get ideas from people from across the state on the best way to tackle the problems of getting people off welfare and into jobs," said Hunt spokeswoman Barbara Thompson.

Hunt conducted the forum because many workers complained that inadequate transportation made it hard for

them to comply with Work First requirements, which mandate that welfare recipients find work within 12 weeks or lose benefits.

Recently, the N.C. Department of Transportation purchased 1,500 vans to help with transportation around the state, said David King, deputy secretary for the Transit, Rail and Aviation division of the N.C. DOT.

The N.C. DOT also plans to put up \$1.75 million for Work First transporta-

tion, said King.

The community leaders met to find ways to fix the transportation problem within local communities.

"The purpose of this gathering is to get everyone who cares about transportation to talk about creative solutions about getting people to work," said Leslie Boney, project director of Work First for the N.C. Department of Commerce.

King said it was the responsibility of

community leaders to abandon past transportation policies and come up with new ones.

"The success of this program is largely dependent on officials to get creative and come up with new ideas," he said. "Business as usual will not solve the problem."

Lois Nilsen, spokeswoman for the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, emphasized the importance of volunteer groups to join in the search for

solutions.

The First Presbyterian Church of Wilson has a program to transport Work First participants to work.

The Wheels to Work program in Winston-Salem also loans cars to employed welfare recipients within their city.

"It is extremely important to have that extra help," Nilsen said.

"People need someone for emotional and practical support."



## IN THE NEWS

Top stories from the state, nation and world.

### Researchers: brains differ for strong, weak readers

WINSTON-SALEM — The brains of some people who read poorly, including dyslexic people, differ physiologically from normal readers, according to researchers at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center.

Dr. John R. Absher, a Wake Forest University assistant professor, said the findings could lead to efforts to identify potentially poor readers early in life, even before they begin to read, through brain imaging.

The Wake Forest study, presented Monday at the Society of Neuroscience meeting in New Orleans, said the part of the brain called the thalamus is less active in poor readers, said Absher.

At least two stages of reading are linked to activity in the thalamus, said Absher.

### Delays could force U.S. intervention in railroad

WASHINGTON — The government warned today it may be forced to step in to rescue Union Pacific Railroad from problems that have snarled shipments along the nation's largest railroad from the Gulf of Mexico to the West Coast.

"Sometimes government must intervene, and the extent of the rail service problems ... suggest that this may be one of those times," said Linda Morgan, head of the Surface Transportation Board. "It may be that we can no longer wait for the private sector to resolve this matter."

The board held a hearing today into delays that have left corn, wheat and soybeans piled up on the ground this fall as transportation stalls along Union Pacific tracks.

The railroad "has put the nation at economic risk in a growing economy," said Gus Owen, a member of the Surface Transportation Board.

### Oral impotence treatment to be available in spring

BETHESDA, Md. — Millions of impotent American men are about to get a treatment revolution — new pills that promise to restore sexual function without the discomfort and embarrassment of traditional therapies.

The first oral medicine for impotence — a drug that can cause erections within 20 minutes of swallowing the pill — could be sold by April, impotence specialists said Monday.

Patients who have tried the experimental pills say they work easily.

"My wife said it was like I was Tarzan," said Alfred Pariser of Los Angeles, who was impotent for a year following prostate cancer surgery, until he tried Viagra, the drug that works in 20 minutes.

### HIV-positive man infects teens, women with virus

MAYVILLE, N.Y. — An HIV-positive man who traded drugs for sex with young women and teens he approached in schools and parks infected at least nine of them with the AIDS virus, authorities said Monday.

At least one other person was infected by one of the man's sex partners, and at least 70 others, some as young as 13, might have been exposed to the virus, health officials said.

"He liked to lurk around the edges of schools or parks, maybe where kids would be playing basketball, and pick out young ladies who may, for one reason or another, be in a risk-taking mode," county Health Commissioner Robert Berke said.

"Sex for drugs appears to be implicated in at least some of the contacts."

Nushawn Williams, 20, infected at least three women and possibly a fourth before learning he was HIV positive in September 1996, Berke said.

But he allegedly continued having unprotected sex and directly infected at least six more before leaving in January.

District Attorney James Subjack said he also would pursue charges of reckless endangerment and first-degree assault against Williams for each person he allegedly infected.

Each of those charges carry a maximum prison term of 25 years.

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