

# 'Legally blind' resident has new vision for future

Dione Chambers found hope in new trade through Goodwill

By EMILY WEAVER  
Editor

Her house sits in Kings Mountain. Her mailbox stands in Bessemer City. And although she may have had trouble seeing tomorrow, thanks to Goodwill - that is where her hope lies.

Dione Chambers had been a successful hairstylist for five years, when at the age of 27 she began to lose her eyesight. Back in 2000, she said, she had some fluid on her brain which damaged her optical nerves.

"It took away a lot of my vision," she said.

Chambers was diagnosed as "legally blind." She could no longer drive a car and her attention to detail as a hairstylist became too blurry to continue in her profession.

Over the past eight years, she began to give in to the overwhelming feeling of hopelessness which surrounded her. She could still make out shapes and colors. But her vision of the future began to lose its form.

One of her friends told her to see if North Carolina's Division of Services for the Blind could help. Chambers called the agency and was directed to Eddie Everett, district coordinator. In their conversations, a heavy question entered the room - "what do you want to do?"

She said she had not given much thought to what she wanted to do, feeling there was little hope for doing anything.

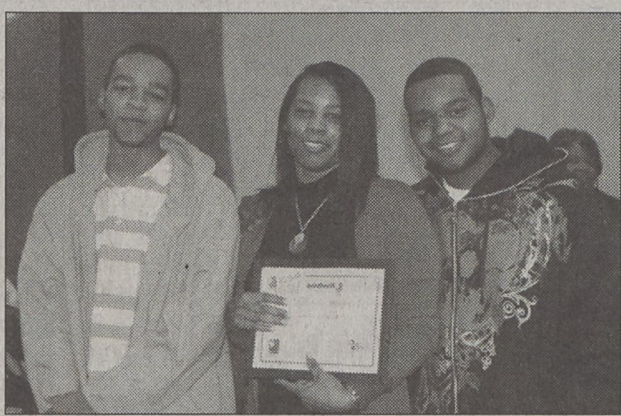
"I asked, 'Well, what can I do?' He said, 'You can do anything but drive,'" she recalled with laughter.

She decided that she wanted to do something with customer service. "I'm a people person. I like working with people," she said.

Everett introduced her to a customer service job training class offered through Goodwill. The course, which is offered to qualified citizens for free thanks to donations at local stores and public support, helped Chambers regain her hope in a new trade.

At the end of the four-week-long class and at the age of 35, she graduated with 60 other students at the Goodwill district headquarters in Charlotte on Friday morning.

She gave the class address, sharing her inspiring story with a packed room of graduates, faculty, friends



Dione Chambers, center, stands with her proud sons Sadarius Chambers, left, and Taqualin Chambers after receiving her completion certificate and a couple of awards in a Goodwill job training graduation ceremony Friday morning.

and family.

Before deciding on pursuing a profession in customer service, she said that it was her sons who gave her the initial idea. They fussed that she was always on the phone.

"I said, 'Well, why don't I do something I like doing and get paid (for it),' she told Friday morning's crowd as they laughed and clapped. With hope, will and determination, she added, the possibilities are endless.

There were a few times when she worried how well she would do in the class. She credits her teachers for their support.

"They saw me. They didn't see the disability," Chambers said.

"Nobody ever realized that she had a disability because she performed so well," said Tracy Wilson, one of Chambers' instructors. "Her attitude was always positive. She was really like a class-motivator. She motivated everybody."

Her teachers were inspired by her determination and how, unlike others in her situation, she chose not to give up. They weren't the only ones. In addition to her certificate of completion and an award for perfect attendance, Chambers was bestowed the Team Player award, which was voted on by the peers in the class.

"She got the Team Player award because she was always the one when you say you want somebody to volunteer to do something, she would say 'I'll do it,'" said Leslie Clay, another one of Chambers' instructors.

Both teachers believe that Chambers will do well.

Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont offers three job training classes in the Charlotte area on Banking and Customer

Service, Construction, and Hospitality and Tourism. The agency also offers a class in Gaston County through its Customer Service Call Center program, which Chambers completed.

"A lot of people are being laid off and they don't have the skills (required for some of the jobs that are still out there)," said Armando Barragan, communications and promotions manager of GISP. "But people can come to our free program and be more marketable."

"Goodwill's Occupational Skills Training programs are unique within the greater Charlotte area. Students not only receive training for careers in targeted industry sectors, but they also receive counseling and career development services leading to personal and economic independence," according to Goodwill officials. "Over the past 15 years, Goodwill's OST program has changed the lives of more than 1,500 people, who today hold positions of responsibility in the computer, banking, call center, customer service, retail, construction, hospitality and tourism industries."

The graduating classes of GISP have continued to grow over the past few years. Friday's class of 60 was one of its largest.

"Goodwill operates 19 retail stores and has 37 total donation sites in Mecklenburg, Gaston, Lincoln, Union, Cleveland, York and Lancaster counties. Proceeds from the sale of donated goods fund employment and training services for individuals facing barriers to employment," according to Goodwill officials.

For more information, visit [www.goodwillsp.org](http://www.goodwillsp.org) or call 704-372-3434.

## HOSPICE

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With the Kings Mountain addition, she said, Hospice Cleveland County will be the only hospice in the state with two separate free-standing facilities.

Robbie Reynolds, president of the Cleveland Hospice Board of Directors, gave the opening prayer and Reynolds, McGinnis, Kings Mountain Mayor Rick Murphrey, Rhodes and Joseph Tysinger, chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee used shovels to break ground.

The 15,000 square foot Hospice House in Kings Mountain will have eight spacious private patient rooms, each with a private bath and an outdoor patio. A living room, dining room, family sitting areas, children's playroom, a patient spa and a small chapel will allow space for patients and families to gather and additionally a large conference room, outfitted with audiovisual equipment and a commercial kitchen will be available for community use. Outdoor courtyard spaces will integrate Kings Mountain's natural landscape into the experience of Hospice House, a relaxed and homelike atmosphere and alternative to hospital admission and nursing home placement where patient and their families can receive premiere end-of-life care with a focus on comfort and quality of life.

## LEGISLATURE

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approved by a department head" (which does not apply to tools needed for classroom instruction); suspend all travel and training plans except for matters of public safety, public health, job requirements, economic development opportunities or emergency situations; hold off on any "pay-as-you-go appropriations for capital improvement repair and renovation projects"; and to temporarily freeze any vacant positions in which no prior commitments have been made.

While the state hopes these cuts will cover the balance, other legislators have proposed more taxes to bridge the gap. Senate leader Marc Basnight proposed a raise in the state's "sin taxes" (on alcohol and cigarettes), which would provide the state with a few extra million, but not \$2 billion.

"I plan to keep the pressure on not to raise taxes," said Sen. Debbie Clary. "It's going to be a tough budget session and the ultimate goal is to be responsible in making necessary cuts with(out) causing harm."

"This session must focus on ways to bring jobs to North Carolina," said Rep. Tim Moore. "Our region is experiencing high unemployment because the manufacturing sector has cut back because of the recession. I have friends and family members who are unemployed and know this is a tough time for a lot of families."

Rep. Pearl Burris-Floyd, who began her

first term in Raleigh last Wednesday, said that her top priorities include the state of NC's economy, jobs and workforce development.

"It took a while for our economy to get in this mess and it will take some time to fully recover, however, at the state level we must continue business recruitment initiatives and expand worker retraining programs," Moore said. "We also need to ensure that unemployment benefits are extended to help folks who are having trouble finding a job."

"The first priority is job creation and retention," Clary said in an e-mail. "We need to be more aggressive in our job retention efforts with small business. Job credits, lowering the corporate income tax and research and development support systems are all on my agenda."

While Burris-Floyd familiarizes herself with Raleigh, the two things she hopes they will be able to accomplish this session are balancing the budget and bringing jobs to the district.

Aside from jobs, Moore said that he plans to fight for the region to have a piece of the federal stimulus "pie" for "infrastructure development."

"We also need to find ways to reduce the cost of government since the (economic) downturn will mean lower tax revenues for the state," he said.

All of these ideas and more may be needed this session to put a crumbling economy back together again.

## MEMORIAL

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Day came, he returned to Norfolk Naval Hospital and Naval Air Station on the cruiser Memphis."

"Sidney Dixon was also in the U.S. Navy, assigned in 1942 to the battleship USS Montpelier, his home for four years," according to information compiled by the KM Rotary Club. "The ship carried Dixon through nine of the 13 major engagements fought in the Pacific Theater. The ship spent 14 months being bombarded while fighting night and day in the air/sea battles, and then headed north to the Marinas, Saipan, Tinian and Guam, where they engaged in the Battle of the Philippine Sea. The Philippines were recaptured in 1944 with the help of the crew of the USS Montpelier. They were based in Okinawa in 1945 when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, followed by the second atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki that ended the war in the Pacific Theater. The ship then went to Kobe, Japan, to remove the prisoners of war and the survivors in the Philippines. The USS Montpelier traveled more than 200,000 miles and fired more rounds of ammunition than any ship in the U.S. Navy during World War II."

Both heroes are deemed more than wor-

thy to be counted among the 100 in April's "Flight of Honor." In addition to the special visit to the WWII Memorial, veterans will be served lunch and bussed to the Lincoln, Vietnam and Korean War memorials and will visit Arlington National Cemetery, where many of their fallen comrades lie, to observe the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Afterwards, they will travel to the airport for the trip back to Charlotte, where they will be welcomed home by family and friends.

The cost of the trip, estimated at \$500 per veteran, will be free to the heroes who embark on it.

The KM Rotary Club decided to join the efforts of Rotary District 7680, representing several mid-western NC counties, to send these veterans on this "Flight of Honor."

If you would like to contribute to this special cause, honoring local heroes, contact the KM Rotary President Earl Lutz at 704-482-9783 or by email to [lutze@ibankatfnb.com](mailto:lutze@ibankatfnb.com) or the project coordinator, Steve Padgett at 704-418-0181 or by email to [shpadgett99@earthlink.net](mailto:shpadgett99@earthlink.net)

Watch future editions of the Kings Mountain Herald for feature stories on these brave heroes and some of their tales from when America saved a world at war.

## RATES

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than doubled since a year ago.

Among the county's projected labor force of 50,937 workers, 6,116 were without a job last month, according to the ESC.

A glimmer of hope came for some in the county when Napoleon Brewer announced that his call center, Ultimate Concert, Inc., would bring around 2,800 jobs to the area. The new employees were supposed to begin their job training on Monday. Brewer "closed shop" on Friday, canceling his plans of doing business in Shelby - at least for now.

Investigations have shown that Brewer allegedly owes thousands of dollars in back taxes for other businesses he started up in California. The ESC and other agencies, like Cleveland Community College's Workforce Development center, have urged job seekers to do their homework on companies before applying for positions.

The research will not only give applicants an edge or an idea of what to expect from the company, it may

also help protect the unemployed from possible schemes or identity thefts.

The state and local communities continue to reflect the economic crisis of the nation, where unemployment has reached 7.2 percent - the highest since 1993.

North Carolina's unemployment rate increased to 8.7 percent in December, according to statistics released by the NC ESC. It is the highest rate since June 1983 when 9 percent of workers were unemployed. Although the work force has grown by about 31,240 laborers since then, figures show that 396,846 workers across the state are currently unemployed.

"Every corner of North Carolina is feeling the effects of our national economy. Layoffs and cutbacks have taken a toll on many of our sectors, including Retail during the holiday season, Professional and Business Services, along with Construction and Manufacturing," said ESC Chairman Moses Carey Jr.

Help is available for those looking for jobs at Diversified Staffing, on Battleground Avenue in Kings Mountain, and at the ESC offices in Shelby and Gastonia or on-line at [www.ncesc.com](http://www.ncesc.com)

## FUGITIVE

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the name "Kissa Lavender." When that name failed, Worley apparently tried the name "Patricia White." Both names are listed as aliases on the arrest report.

When her true identity became available, officers ran her information through the system and learned that

she had been listed as an "absconder" (a run-away fugitive) from Buncombe County since 2001.

Worley was arrested and transported to Cleveland County Jail where she was placed under a \$90,000 secured bond. She was transported to Buncombe County Jail on Jan. 28.

Worley was released on bond on that same day.

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