



HBCU band competition at Bojangles Coliseum

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HERBERT L. WHITE | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Gentrification of formerly working class Black neighborhoods like Biddleville in west Charlotte has made affordable housing more difficult in the city's urban core.

Beyond reach: Charlotte's affordable housing crisis

Charlotte Post Foundation hosts webinar on challenges and potential solutions

By Herbert L. White

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Affordable housing can't keep pace with Charlotte's growth.

The Charlotte Post Foundation will host a Jan. 27 virtual forum on the subject with panelists Nadia Anderson, an urban design professor at UNC Charlotte, Erin Barbee, chief strategy officer at DreamKey Partners and Jeff Elam, manager at Matthews Habitat for Humanity. The webinar will start at 6 p.m. and registration is required. For information, email fdnpresident@thecharlottepost.com.

Affordability is a barrier to working-

class and lower income families. Charlotte has a shortage of more than 40,000 units that the lowest-income households can afford as the median home price rose to \$443,850 last year.

To afford a median-priced home, a Charlotte household needs an income of \$138,000, while the actual median household income is roughly \$80,000.

"There's no silver bullet," Anderson said. "Nothing's going to solve [the issue alone] but there are some examples of other things that have worked

to some degree in different places. This is a crisis everywhere. A lot of places don't have markets that are growing like ours, but starting to look at a wider kind of spectrum of examples wouldn't be the worst idea."

Affordability is increasingly hard to find in Charlotte, with only 2% of houses sold for under \$150,000 in 2024, and about 19% sold for under \$300,000. Homeownership remains elusive for Black people locally. In Mecklenburg County, the rate is 43% compared to 68% for white households. The North Carolina rate is 47% for Black households

Please see **POST** | 2A



Anderson



Washington



Scott

Health chief takes top state job in NJ

By Herbert L. White

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Mecklenburg County Health Director Dr. Raynard Washington is on his way to New Jersey as state health commissioner.

Washington, Mecklenburg health director since 2021, resigned on Jan. 20, after New Jersey Gov.-elect Mikie Sherrill nominated him as commissioner. Washington closed a five-year stint with the county that started in 2020 as deputy health director. He was promoted to director the next year.

Dr. Kimberly Scott, assistant health director of the Population Health Division, has been appointed interim director by county commissioners.

"Serving as Mecklenburg County Health Director has been an absolute honor," Washington said in a statement. "I am so proud of our public health team and all that we have accomplished during some of the most challenging times for public health. While I'll miss Mecklenburg County and my colleagues, I know the team here will continue the work to make health possible

Please see **MECKLENBURG** | 2A

McFadden ouster petition denied

By Herbert L. White

herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

A Superior Court judge on Jan. 15 tossed a petition urging the removal of Mecklenburg County Sheriff Garry McFadden from office but ruled it can be refiled if it's approved by the district attorney.

Judge Stuart Albright said state law requires such a petition be approved by either the county attorney or district attorney before it can be filed. Because it wasn't, Albright dismissed the petition without ruling. Under North Carolina law, only a court can remove a sheriff from office once allegations are proven. Mecklenburg District Attorney Spencer Merriweather, who would be tasked with prosecuting the case, has asked the State Bureau of Investigation to probe the allegations.

The petition signed by four former Sheriff's Office employees and N.C. Rep. Carla Cunningham demanded McFadden's removal for alleged extortion and corruption, willful misconduct and maladministration, and refusal to perform duties of the office. Cunningham alleges McFadden leveled a threat against her in connection with her support of House Bill 318, which mandates sheriffs in all 100 counties to honor detainer requests by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The petition also alleged a hostile work environment and a culture of intimidation and retribution

Please see **SHERIFF** | 2A



McFadden

«APPRECIATION

Mary Martin pioneered local home economics

By Ken Koontz

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Mary Rosa Caldwell Martin, whose work as a home economist made her one of Charlotte's most-recognizable advocates of home life, died Dec. 19, 2025, at age 97.

Funeral service was held Jan. 11 at Berean Seventh Day Adventist Church.

A North Carolina A&T State University alumna who earned an undergraduate degree in elementary education and master's in home economics, Mrs. Martin in 1960 was hired by Mecklenburg County as a demonstration agent in the Extension Service, a job relegated to Black employees. Over 32 years with the county, she trained and organized hundreds of students annually in clothing construction classes and developed a devoted media following.

Mrs. Martin conducted sewing and craft fairs at the Convention Center that drew thousands of fabric distributors, sewing machine dealers and other industry-related professionals. In addition to her skill in home economics training, she was especially known for the distinctive hats she wore, many of which she designed and made by hand.

Mrs. Martin's expertise led to a historic crossover into broadcasting as the first Black person to do live television on Charlotte's three stations. She was also a regular on WGIV radio, whose audience was predominantly Black.

After retiring from the Extension Service, Mrs. Martin authored a book, "Blot The Spot," and earned a patent for the Precision Stitch Tutor, a sewing tool sold across the country, including Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.



Martin



ADOBE STOCK

There are nearly 3,800 data centers in the U.S., according to Data Center Map.

Black workers disproportionately displaced by AI as tech grows

By Eric Tegethoff

NORTH CAROLINA NEWS SERVICE

As artificial intelligence grows, concerns about the impact on communities of color is also increasing.

Experts say AI will disproportionately impact Black and brown workers through displacement and the environmental burden of data centers, which are more likely to be located in marginalized communities. North Carolina has at least 90 data centers, according to Data Center Map.

Keisha Bross, director of the NAACP's Center for Opportunity,

Race and Justice, said Black workers are overrepresented in entry-level jobs, as well as manufacturing and logistics work.

"In the artificial intelligence space, a lot of these jobs that are usually taken within the South and these big manufacturing sites an e-commerce logistic sites," she said. They're going to be replaced in the future."

Bross underscored that it's still unclear exactly where and how AI will displace workers. Data centers have also been linked to health impacts for communities that live near

Please see **BLACK** | 2A

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Please Recycle



Post forum on Charlotte affordable housing crisis

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compared to 75% for their white peers.

Nationally, the Black homeownership rate is 45.7%, compared to 74.3% for their white peers. The peak Black ownership rate was 49% in 2004.

“We’re boots on the ground here at Habitat, and over the last seven years, our home prices have gone from \$160,000 to over \$350,000 so what we’ve seen is the affordability gap that your average borrower, who we could help in the past, you can no longer assist them at this point,” Elam said. “There’s a major issue with affordability and income not keeping up with home prices.”

Starter homes have become more difficult to find, with homes priced under \$150,000 representing only 1.88% of the market in 2025. Also, low-cost rentals, generally defined as under \$800 a month – make up 8% of Mecklenburg County’s inventory.

In 2011, they made up 45% of inventory. As a result, 51% of renters in the region are considered cost burdened because they spend more than 30% of their gross income on housing.

Population growth, rising prices and public policy all have an impact on affordability.

An estimated 117 people move to Charlotte daily, which expands pressure on demand. With more than 471,000 people moving to the region

from 2014-23, including 49,000 from 2022-23 – roughly the population of Huntersville – workforce housing isn’t keeping up in terms of units or affordability, according to the State of Housing 2024 Report published by UNC Charlotte researchers. That growth paired with a shortage of available housing and high interest rates means a shortfall of housing that low- and moderate-income people can afford.

Rapid development in working-class communities, which has gentrified and raised property values in historically Black neighborhoods in the city’s urban, has cut into affordable housing stock as well. Another element is the presence of corporate landlords buying up older homes and raising rental rates.

Policy also plays a role. State law limits municipalities’ ability to implement potential solutions like inclusionary zoning or barring source of income bias, which pushes affordable housing beyond working.

Among possible solutions is Charlotte’s commitment last year to a program that supports accessory dwellings, or housing separate from a single-family home on a parcel.

“There are a lot of ways to increase density,” Anderson said. “The accessory dwelling unit is ... now possible, I think, in almost all neighborhoods in Charlotte, unless you’re in an HOA [community], which is a large number of neighborhoods to add an accessory dwelling unit that can be essentially a small rental. And the city does have some programs.”

Community land trusts seek higher profile as housing option

By Greg Childress

NC NEWSLINE

North Carolina’s community land trusts are working to raise the profile of their housing preservation model, which its members see as a vital tool in the struggle for affordable housing in a rapidly growing state.

Community land trusts keep housing permanently affordable by maintaining ownership of the land and selling the homes or buildings sitting on it to individuals or groups. The model removes the land cost from the purchase price, and the land trust controls resale values to ensure homes remain affordable to future generations.

Several of the state’s trusts have launched the North Carolina Community Land Trust Coalition to share best practices and resources to shape housing policy, and “increase government and philanthropic support” for the programs by educating lawmakers and the public.

Today, more than 300 Community Land Trusts operate across the country, including a dozen or more in North Carolina. Funding comes primarily through competitive processes for grants, loans and other sources at the federal, state and local levels.

“The hardest thing to do is to find operational funding, especially for newer land trusts that are starting to be created,” said Kimberly Sanchez, executive director of the Community Home Trust in Chapel Hill. “You have to acquire land, which is not cheap and you have to hold it forever, so you have to have some level of consistent operational funding just to make sure you can keep the inventory that you have forever for the community.”

Sanchez has led the Chapel Hill-based Community Home Trust for six years. The nonprofit has been around for more than 30 years and is one of the oldest community land trusts in the state. It followed the Durham Community Land Trustees, Inc., which became the first in the state in 1987.

Collectively, the state’s community land trusts have created 394 homeownership units, 398 affordable rental units and have supported households with an average of 63% of area median income, the coalition reported.

Sanchez’s group and the Durham Community Land Trustees control hundreds of those properties, while newer community land trusts control just a few or sometimes a single property. The coalition expects 12 to 14 members, but noted that some are new and still forming and will be added to the coalition’s new website at a later date.

Sherry Taylor, executive director of the Durham Community Land Trustees, said the coalition’s rise is timely, given the growing interest in community land trusts in North Carolina.

“We actually started meeting last year to come together and make sure that permanently affordable housing is at the top of mind, not just for individual areas of the state that we cover, but as a statewide initiative,” Taylor said.

Taylor noted the state law allows property tax exemptions for certain affordable housing when they’re controlled by qualifying nonprofits.

But, she added, there’s more to be done.



Sanchez



Taylor

“We realized that attainable housing, especially home ownership, is something that is a growing need all across the state,” Taylor said. “We wanted to first inform lawmakers that this is a model that has worked all over the country and has worked in North Carolina and is still working to create attainable homeownership.”

Finding new ways for community land trusts to increase production of affordable housing would be the next step in the process, Taylor said.

“I’m not gonna list out all the ways that they [lawmakers] can possibly help this group, but I do think thinking through those things and getting in front of them will be the primary goals of our coalition,” Taylor said.

Last year, a study commissioned by NC Realtors, the NC Chamber and the NC Home Builders Association highlighted the extent of the housing crisis in the state. Researchers found North Carolina will need more than 764,000 rental and for-sale units over the next five years to meet demand across all 100 counties.

The NC Housing Coalition has found that 48% of state renters are cost burdened by rent payments and 19% of homeowners have trouble paying their mortgages. A family is considered cost-burdened if it spends more than 30% of income on housing.

Diverse models

North Carolina’s community land trusts operate differently from each other even though they share the same model, said Sanchez with the Community Home Trust in Chapel Hill. She says the model’s flexibility allows responsiveness to local needs.

“We focus on different things, the way that we’re funded is different, the way we interact with our community is different,” Sanchez said. “Durham and Chapel Hill are 10 minutes away from each other, but even just culturally, they’re totally different.”

A notable difference, Sanchez said, is that Durham focused on rentals early on while her organization focused on homeownership. Now, Durham has a growing stock of owner-occupied homes and Sanchez’s organization has entered the rental market.

Sanchez’s organization has nearly 300 properties in its portfolio. Many were acquired through Chapel Hill’s inclusionary housing policy. Under the policy, housing developers are “encouraged” to sell a few housing units to the community land trust.

“It’s that political will that has given us the opportunity to have almost 300 homes,” Sanchez said.

A startup in Watauga County

Over the summer, the relatively new Watauga Community Housing Trust celebrated the completion of its first home, a refurbished, one-bedroom house near downtown Boone that it sold to an adult with disabilities.

The volunteer-run and member-led nonprofit was created in response to skyrocketing housing costs in one of the state’s more expensive zip codes. Boone is a major tourist destination and home to Appalachian State University, both of which put pressure on housing costs.

Ben Loomis, a Watauga land trust

Please see **COMMUNITY** | 4A

Initiative opens doors to entrepreneurs of the future

By Nikya Hightower

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Do Greater Charlotte is opening doors for future entrepreneurs and creatives.

The nonprofit founded by William McNeely teaches young adults to invest in themselves and how to turn ideas and dreams into careers and action. Do Greater has opened its doors to people looking to sharpen their creative skills through programs and technologies from design and business to multimedia creations.

“What we really do is power potential in youth and young adults through training in entrepreneurship, innovation and creative technologies,” McNeely said. “Our real focus is to build spaces around the city of Charlotte that enhance economic mobility.”

“Our core values are these economic connections. We look for individuals who want to participate with us to provide that connection with a kid, with a young adult, someone who can ignite a spark inside of them to want them to not only do better, but to matriculate in an area that they’re interested in.”

The foundation has a creative lab at Shiloh Institutional Baptist Church and a mobile lab that travels to schools and communities. This year the creative lab will expand its hubs to Uptown with plans to open in June. The space will include a creative digital academy, screen printing, video and audio production, along with a full-service coffee shop. McNeely said he doesn’t want the new creative lab to be just a cool place to work, but an “ecosystem of opportunity.”

With creating community spaces comes a need for community support. Having an accessible space for students was a priority for Do Greater which is why all amenities are free for those who join.

“Funding is always a huge issue for us as we believe that the kids in our communities that we serve and even young adults as well, don’t have the capacity to pay for the types of experiences and programs that we create,” McNeely said. “We need all the support from the community that we can get to make sure that our communities around Charlotte are all

given equitable access to opportunities.”

Do Greater Charlotte is looking for mentors who are invested in the community and making an impact. Having exposure to people in the same field is important for students and helps inspire what McNeely calls “creative confidence.”

“A lot of times it’s not seeing opportunities in your own communities that allow you to dream in that area,” he said, “so when you don’t see that and you don’t come into close contact with folks who are successful in those creative and entrepreneurial areas, then you don’t have the vision to understand what could be possible.”

The organization is teaching how to turn passions into long-term goals by fostering confidence and building critical thinking skills. “We look to introduce youth and young adults to ideas around creative technologies,” McNeely said. “We sometimes call them creative trades, acquiring these skills that are useful in the next 10, 20 and 30 years.”

Do Greater pushes participants to solve complex problems and have understanding to set them up in future jobs, especially as AI and other technological advancements shape the creative world.

Since starting Do Greater McNeely shares one of many impact stories where a student was able to set himself up with his own photography business after spending time in the organization.

“The first year, one of his quotes was, ‘after working with Do Greater in the creative lab, I made more money the next year than I had ever had in my entire life,’” McNeely said. “And so now this guy’s on the trajectory to grow a successful small business that pours back into the Charlotte economy but also moves him toward that economic stability.”

In the future Do Greater Charlotte hopes to expand into hyperlocal creative labs making accessibility to their resources easier. “We’re excited about that over the next 10 years of building out that infrastructure,” McNeely said. “So kids from all over the city have access to these creative collisions that we are developing and designing.”

Black workers disproportionately displaced by AI as tech grows

Continued from page 1A

Bross says Black communities already face higher unemployment rates. Black unemployment was at 7.5% in December, compared with 4.4% for the overall population. To ensure Black workers have a place in the new AI economy, she said workers need affordable access to education.

“The best thing that these companies can do is really provide educational tools and resources, because we don’t want people displaced from the workforce,” she said. “We want people to be back in the workforce, but also earning a wage that’s livable.”

Bross said the Trump administration’s fight against diversity, equity and inclusion has hurt people of color. She believes it’s still important for companies to commit to diverse hiring practices because representation matters and a diverse workforce will make their companies more successful in the long run.

“We have to embrace technology and we have to embrace artificial intelligence, but we also have to have oversight,” she said, “and we have to have governance in order to make sure that it’s not discriminatory, and that we’re not implementing technologies that are going to hurt populations of people.”

Mecklenburg health chief moves on to a state role in New Jersey

Continued from page 1A

for everyone.”

As Mecklenburg health director, Washington initiated countywide testing and immunization during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing access to vulnerable populations. He also oversaw county response to infectious disease threats like the 2022

mpox outbreak, boosted access to clinical services including HIV and sexually transmitted infection screenings as well as establishing North Carolina’s first Office of Violence Prevention.

“Dr. Washington’s unique leadership style, expertise, and contributions to Mecklenburg County tran-

scended his role as public health director,” County Manager Mike Bryant said. “An incredibly skilled and resourceful public servant, he played a vital role in helping our community navigate a series of health challenges and transitions.”

Sheriff ouster petition denied

Continued from page 1A

against employees. In addition to Cunningham, the petitioners included former Chief of Staff Kevin Canty, who resigned in 2024; former Sgt. Marcia Crenshaw Hill, a 13-year MCSO employee who said

her job was eliminated while she recovered from an assault by an inmate; Major Bryan Adams, who retired from the department in 2025 after 30 years and Captain Juan Delgado, an MCSO officer from 2004 until his retire-

ment in 2022. McFadden, a Democrat, is running for re-election against challengers Ricky Robbins, Rodney Collins and Antwan Nance in the March primary.

Formerly incarcerated now prison owner

By Eric Tegethoff

NORTH CAROLINA NEWS SERVICE

A North Carolina man has become the first formerly incarcerated man in the nation’s history to buy and repurpose an old prison.

His organization will use the facility for re-entry support services. The former prison is Wayne Correctional Center in Goldsboro, which was decommissioned in 2013.

Kerwin Pittman, founder and executive director of Recidivism Reduction Educational Program Services, or RREPS, said he bought the 19-acre, 80,000-square-foot facility to usher in a new era for the formerly incarcerated. He called it a beacon of light for second chances across the

country. “It changed the narrative that individuals who may have made a mistake and/or bad decision can change and should be given the opportunity to thrive,” he said.

Pittman, who spent 11 years in a correctional facility, said the campus will be a “one-stop shop for re-entry,” with working, housing and health supports available. He said RREPS is on a two-year timeline to open up the campus. Six-month programs will be available for people transitioning out of prison.

Pittman said folks will have options on which program they would like to join.

“They’ll be able to participate in two

Please see **FORMERLY** | 3A

Pregnant woman with heart risk died waiting for help

By Lizzie Presser and Kaviitha Surana
PROPUBLICA

When Ciji Graham visited a cardiologist on Nov. 14, 2023, her heart was pounding at 192 beats per minute, a rate healthy people her age usually reach during the peak of a sprint.

She was having another episode of atrial fibrillation, a rapid, irregular heartbeat. The 34-year-old Greensboro police officer was at risk of a stroke or heart failure.

In the past, doctors had always been able to shock Graham's heart back into rhythm with a procedure called a cardioversion. But this time, the treatment was just out of reach. After a pregnancy test came back positive, the cardiologist didn't offer to shock her. Graham texted her friend from the appointment: "Said she can't cardiovert being pregnant."

The doctor told Graham to consult three other specialists and her primary care provider before returning in a week, according to medical records. Then she sent Graham home as her heart kept hammering.

Like hundreds of thousands of women each year who enter pregnancy with chronic conditions, Graham was left to navigate care in a country where medical options have significantly narrowed.

As ProPublica has reported, doctors in states that ban abortion have repeatedly denied standard care to high-risk pregnant patients. The expert consensus is that cardioversion is safe during pregnancy, and ProPublica spoke with more than a dozen specialists who said they would have immediately admitted Graham to a hospital to get her heart rhythm under control. They found fault, too, with a second cardiologist she saw the following day, who did not perform an electrocardiogram and also sent her home. Although Graham's family gave the doctors permission to speak with ProPublica, neither replied to ProPublica's questions.

Graham came to believe that the best way to protect her health was to end her unexpected pregnancy. But because of new abortion restrictions in North Carolina and nearby states, finding a doctor who could quickly perform a procedure would prove difficult. Many physicians and hospitals now hesitate to discuss abortion, even when women ask about it.

And abortion clinics are not set up to treat certain medically complicated cases. As a result, sick pregnant women like Graham are often on their own.

"I can't feel like this for 9mo," Graham wrote her friend. "I just can't."

She wouldn't. In a region that had legislated its commitment to life, she would spend her final days struggling to find anyone to save hers.

Graham hated feeling out of breath; her life demanded all her energy. Widely admired for her skills behind the wheel, she was often called upon to train fellow officers at the Greensboro Police Department. At home, she needed to chase her 2-year-old son, S.J., around the apartment. She was a natural with kids — she'd helped her single mom raise her nine younger siblings.

She thought her surprise pregnancy had caused the atrial fibrillation, also called A-fib. In addition to heart disease, she had a thyroid disorder; pregnancy could send the gland into overdrive, prompting dangerous heart rhythms.

When Graham saw the first cardiologist, Dr. Sabina Custovic, the 192 heart rate recorded on an EKG should have been a clear cause for alarm. "I can't think of any situation where I would feel comfortable sending anyone

home with a heart rate of 192," said Dr. Jenna Skowronski, a cardiologist at the University of North Carolina. A dozen cardiologists and maternal-fetal medicine specialists who reviewed Graham's case for ProPublica agreed. The risk of death was low, but the fact that she was also reporting symptoms — severe palpitations, trouble breathing — meant the health dangers were significant.

All the experts said they would have tried to treat Graham with IV medication in the hospital and, if that failed, an electrical shock. Cardioversion wouldn't necessarily be simple — likely requiring an invasive ultrasound to check for blood clots beforehand — but it was crucial to slow down her heart. A leading global organization for arrhythmia professionals, the Heart Rhythm Society, has issued clear guidance that "cardioversion is safe and effective in pregnancy."

Even if the procedure posed a small risk to the pregnancy, the risk of not treating Graham was far greater, said Rhode Island cardiologist Dr. Daniel Levine: "No mother, no baby."

Custovic did not answer ProPublica's questions about why the pregnancy made her hold off on the treatment or whether abortion restrictions affect her decision-making.

The next day — as her heart continued to thump — Graham saw a second cardiologist, Dr. Will Camnitz, at Cone Health, one of the region's largest health care systems.

According to medical records, Graham's pulse registered as normal when taken at Camnitz's office, as it had at her appointment the previous day. Camnitz noted that the EKG from the day before showed she was in A-fib and prescribed a blood thinner to prepare for a cardioversion in three weeks — if by then she hadn't returned to a regular heart rhythm on her own.

Some of the experts who reviewed Graham's care said that this was a reasonable plan if her pulse was, indeed, normal. But Camnitz, who specializes in the electrical activity of the heart, did not order another EKG to confirm that her heart rate had come down from 192, according to medical records.

"He's an electrophysiologist and he didn't do that, which is insane," said Dr. Kayle Shapero, a cardio-obstetrics specialist at Brown University. According to experts, a pulse measurement can underestimate the true heart rate of a patient in A-fib. Every cardiologist who reviewed Graham's care for ProPublica said that a repeat EKG would be best practice. If Graham's rate was still as high as it was the previous day, her heart could eventually stop delivering enough blood to major organs. Camnitz did not answer ProPublica's questions about why he didn't administer this test.

Three weeks was a long time to wait with a heart that Graham kept saying was practically leaping out of her chest.

Camnitz knew about Graham's pregnancy but did not discuss whether she wanted to continue it or advise her on her options, according to medical records. That same day, though, Graham reached out to A Woman's Choice, the sole abortion clinic in Greensboro.

North Carolina bans abortion after 12 weeks; Graham was only about six weeks pregnant. Still, there was a long line ahead of her. Women were flooding the state from Tennessee, Georgia and South Carolina, where new abortion bans were even stricter.

On top of that, a recent change in North Carolina law required an in-person consent visit three days before a termination. The same number of patients

were now filling twice as many appointment slots. Graham would need to wait nearly two weeks for an abortion.

It's unclear if she explained her symptoms to the clinic; A Woman's Choice spokesperson said it routinely discards appointment forms and no longer had a copy of Graham's. But the spokesperson told ProPublica that a procedure at the clinic would not have been right for Graham; because of her high heart rate, she would have needed a hospital with more resources.

Dr. Jessica Tarleton, an abortion provider who spent the past few years working in the Carolinas, said she frequently encountered pregnant women with chronic conditions who faced this kind of catch-22: Their risks were too high to be treated in a clinic, and it would be safest to get care at a hospital, but it could be very hard to find one willing to terminate a pregnancy.

In states where abortions have been criminalized, many hospitals have shied away from sharing information about their policies on abortion. Cone Health, where Graham typically went for care, would not tell ProPublica whether its doctors perform abortions and under what circumstances; it said, "Cone Health provides personalized and individualized care to each patient based on their medical needs while complying with state and federal laws."

Graham never learned that she would need an abortion at a hospital rather than a clinic. Physicians at Duke University and the University of North Carolina, the premier academic medical centers in the state, said that she would have been able to get one at their hospitals — but that would have required a doctor to connect her or for Graham to have somehow known to show up.

Had Graham lived in another country, she may not have faced this maze alone.

In the United Kingdom, for example, a doctor trained in caring for pregnant women with risky medical conditions would have been assigned to oversee all of Graham's care, ensuring it was appropriate, said Dr. Marian Knight, who leads the U.K.'s maternal mortality review program. Hospitals in the U.K. also must abide by standardized national protocols or face regulatory consequences.

Researchers point to these factors, as well as a national review system, as key to the country's success in lowering its rate of maternal death. The maternal mortality rate in the U.S. is more than double that of the U.K. and last on the list of wealthy countries.

Graham's friend Shameka Jackson could tell that something was wrong. Graham didn't seem like her usual "perky and silly" self, Jackson said. On the phone, she sounded weak, her voice barely louder than a whisper.

When Jackson offered to come over, Graham said it would be a waste of time. "There's nothing you can do but sit with me," Jackson said she replied. "The doctors ain't doing nothing."

Graham no longer cooked or played with her son after work, said her boyfriend, Shawn Scott. She stopped hoisting S.J. up to let him dunk on the hoop on the closet door. Now, she headed straight for the couch and barely spoke, except to say that no one would shock her heart.

"I hate feeling like this," she texted Jackson. "Ain't slept, chest hurts."

"All I can do is wait until the 28th," Graham said, the date of her scheduled abortion.

On the morning of Nov. 19, Scott awoke to a rap on the front door of the apartment he and Graham shared. He'd been asleep



ANDREA ELLEN REED | PROPUBLICA

Carolyn Graham holds a portrait of her daughter Ciji, who was a Greensboro police officer.

on the couch after a night out with friends and thought that Graham had left for work.

A police officer introduced himself and explained that Graham hadn't shown up and wasn't answering her phone. He knew she hadn't been feeling well and wanted to check in.

Most mornings, Graham was up around 5 a.m. to prepare for the day. With Scott, she would brush S.J.'s teeth, braid his hair and dress him in stylish outfits, complete with Jordans or Chelsea boots.

When Scott walked into their bedroom, Graham was face down in bed, her body cold when he touched her. The two men pulled her down to the floor to start CPR, but it was too late. S.J. stood in his crib, silently watching as they realized.

The medical examiner would list Graham's cause of death as "cardiac arrhythmia due to atrial fibrillation in the setting of recent pregnancy." There was no autopsy, which could have identified the specific complication that led to her death.

High-risk pregnancy specialists and cardiologists who reviewed Graham's case were taken aback by Custovic's failure to act urgently. Many said her decisions reminded them of behaviors they've seen from other cardiologists when treating pregnant patients; they attribute this kind of hesitation to gaps

in education. Although cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in pregnant women, a recent survey developed with the American College of Cardiology found that less than 30% of cardiologists reported formal training in managing heart conditions in pregnancy.

"A large proportion of the cardiology workforce feels uncomfortable providing care to these patients," the authors concluded in the Journal of the American Heart Association. The legal threats attached to abortion bans, many doctors have told ProPublica, have made some cardiologists even more conservative.

Custovic did not answer ProPublica's questions about whether she felt she had adequate training. A spokesperson for Cone Health, where Camnitz works, said, "Cone Health's treatment for pregnant women with underlying cardiac disease is consistent with accepted standards of care in our region." Although Graham's family gave the hospital permission to discuss Graham's care with ProPublica, the hospital did not comment on specifics.

Three doctors who have served on state maternal mortality review committees, which study the deaths of pregnant women, told ProPublica that Graham's death was preventable.

"There were so many points where they could

have intervened," said Dr. Amelia Huntsberger, a former member of Idaho's panel.

Graham's is the seventh case ProPublica has investigated in which a pregnant woman in a state that significantly restricted abortion died after she was unable to access standard care.

The week after she died, Graham's family held a candlelight ceremony outside of her high school, which drew friends and cops in uniform, and also Greensboro residents whose lives she had touched.

One woman approached Graham's sisters and explained Graham had interrupted her suicide attempt five years earlier and reassured her that her life had value; she had recently texted Graham, "If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be here today, expecting my first child."

As for Graham's own son, no one explained to S.J. that his mother had died. They didn't know how to describe death to a toddler. Instead, his dad and grandmother and aunts and uncles told him that his mom had left Earth and gone to the moon. S.J. now calls it the "Mommy moon."

For the past two years, every night before bed, he asks to go outside, even on the coldest winter evenings. He points to the moon in the dark sky and tells his mother that he loves her.



RECIDIVISM REDUCTION EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM SERVICES

The nonprofit founded by Kerwin Pittman, above, will run reentry services at the former Wayne Correctional Center in Goldsboro.

Formerly incarcerated now prison owner

Continued from page 2A

tracks," he said, "either our workforce development track, which essentially consists of job placement and some job readiness skills, or our educational and vocational track, in which we will give certifications and trainings to individuals — certifications such as brick-masonry, plumbing, HVAC, electrical wiring, con-

struction, different things of that nature."

The new campus will also have a residential side, with Pittman estimating about 200 to 250 people will stay there every six months. The campus will have wraparound health services as well, including peer support, therapy and health staff.

The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

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The selfless journey of monks’ walk

As a Laotian American raised in Buddhist culture, the walking monks have reawakened something I had forgotten was already inside me.

As a college student juggling education, building my résumé, and maintaining my social life, their walk for peace offered a powerful reminder. In a world full of noise, they showed me the quiet strength of loving-kindness.

Life in the United States can feel overwhelming, with ICE raids, economic pressure, constant bad news, and communities living with fear and uncertainty. With so much negativity, it can feel almost impossible to be happy. But Buddhist teachings remind us that even in chaos, compassion still exists within all of us. I personally struggled with anxiety, intrusive thoughts, and moments of hopelessness, making my thinking and judgment feel clouded.

That’s when I remember the teaching of impermanence. Life is forever changing, and just as my mind and emotions do, it won’t always stay that way. Only we have the power over what truly affects us, letting the pessimism crowd my mind and having it linger will cause inner peace to be tainted. But instead of being overcome by such darkness, practicing mindfulness, meditation, and loving-kindness will give strength in facing those challenges.

The monks’ selflessness also deeply touched my family, especially my mother. When she learned about their 2,300-mile journey from Texas to Washington, she became emotional.

She told me: “Everywhere they go, everywhere they walk, everywhere they stay, they teach people to love each other and share their wisdom.”

When we attended their speech at Marion Diehl Recreation Center, my mother cried tears of joy, shocked that many people had come out to witness the event. She was proud of the monks, of their mission, their dedication, and their hearts.

“They give everything to everybody,” she said. “Their body and their minds.” Seeing her so moved made me feel happy for her to be filled with love.

I saw all kinds of people – some curious, some in awe, others holding flowers to offer the monks. It didn’t matter their background, culture, or religion. For a moment, everyone shared the same intention, peace.

On social media, I saw people crying along the street, offering food or water, or simply watching the monks pass by. Some shared their personal stories of pain and suffering. The monks listened with empathy and offered comfort without judgment. Their having such deep compassion and empathy for others is why their message has reached so many.

The monks’ compassion radiates through others as they continue to spread their message and teachings. They continuously practice D’na, the act of giving and receiving.

People offer flowers, food, and water, and the monks pass those same flowers to others waiting along the road. It becomes a chain of kindness.

Their walk is a form of meditation. Some of the monks are barefoot to focus on feeling each step they take, being more connected with the earth, while mindful of breathing, and being silent. They tie spiritual bracelets to the people, Sai Sin in Thai or Faiy in Lao, to symbolize protection, peace, and strength to those who are there to support them on their trek.

What fascinates me most is that despite how they may face judgment, misunderstanding, or discrimination along the way, they continue to set out on the journey for the walk of peace.

No matter our stories or background, the Buddhist monks share that inner peace already lives within us. Spreading love is the biggest step to reducing hatred. Their pure compassion and loving-kindness will continue to be felt by many.

Jaslynn Vorachith, a junior communication arts major at Johnson C. Smith University, is The Post’s emerging journalist fellow.

Community land trusts

Continued from page 2A

member, said the previous owner of the house contacted the then-startup about selling a lot and a rundown house at a good price.

“It was just sort of an opportunity that was too big to pass up, even though we at the time, we had really just gotten started,” Loomis said. “That was like early 2023 and we had no money in the bank.”

Loomis said the organization spent the next summer fundraising and raised enough money to purchase the property. Over the next two years, he said, the group took out a construction loan, continued to fundraise and “basically rebuilt it from the ground up, everything from the foundation to the roof.”

Affordable housing has become an even bigger issue in region in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Helene and the historic flooding that ensued, Loomis said.

Upheaval of western imperialism

Imperialism is system of colonization in which stronger nations – those with money and armies – invade smaller, weaker nations for the purpose of exploitation, like land and mineral resources.

Great Britain colonized the western hemisphere for vast land, agricultural, and other resources previously untapped by the Spanish conquistadors who had come to places like Saint Augustine and California. Indigenous people who inhabited this continent, like the Native Americans, were displaced in what was called, the “Trail of Tears,” forcing them to relocate to places west of the Mississippi and the plains of the Midwest.

Many inhabitants of Minnesota still bear the physical characteristics of the American Native people. They continue to be harassed and killed as if they weren’t here first. Self-determination, free will and personal choice are hallmarks of the democratic way of life. Rounding people up the way the Trump Administration is gleefully doing, is not only cruel and wrong, but also is most assuredly un-American.

King George, in “Hamilton,” sings to the discontented colonists, “I will send a fully armed battalion to remind you of my love.” So much for the love part. So much for truth and the American way.

We have seen the video. Administration leaders, like Kristi Noem, are asking us not to believe with our own eyes, just like we saw on January 6th. Ms. Good was shot in cold blood. Everybody who has a cell phone has a camera today. Even the ICE agent who shot Ms. Good was filming the event.

It is interesting that some in the Senate are getting a little squishy in their support of Trump. The fawning is fraying, and the end is beginning. This administration must think we are stupid or not paying attention to what is going on in front of our eyes. What we are seeing is the strongman exercise of power to suppress First Amendment rights and the American way. Misogyny and racism played a part in this horrific event. A brown life had lower value than did the white officer who shot her.

Martin Luther King, from the steps of the reflection pool at the Lincoln Memorial, spoke words forever etched in the American ethos. “The arc of the moral universe bends toward justice.” We are located somewhere along that arc. It seems a little slippery today.

When I posted a picture on social media of the No Kings rally we attended, people were divided in their responses. We apparently are not one nation under God.

Some people still have a misguided faith that believes God is fine with this hate and division. Scripture from the Old Testament Prophets criticizes those who treat the aliens and foreigners with harm and disdain as being outside right relationship with God. I am not making that up. Read it yourself.

America is facing a wake-up call like nothing we have seen since Hitler in Germany. You may be ready to let America go to the billionaires but autocracy and plutocracy are not desirable outcomes of the American experiment.

Lib Campbell is a retired Methodist pastor, retreat leader, columnist and host of the blogsite www.avirtualchurch.com.


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TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Charlotte FC forward Wilfried Zaha (10), who scored 10 goals for the Crown in his 2025 MLS debut, returns to the fold along with Pep Biel, who missed the playoffs last year with a hamstring injury after scoring 10 goals and 12 assists.

Charlotte FC aims higher in 2026

After scoring club record 59 points in 2025, the Crown aspires to win trophies, MLS playoff series

By Herbert L. White
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Charlotte FC's best season ever ended without hardware.

The Crown earned the most wins (19) and points (59) in the franchise's four-year history as well as the fourth seed in the Eastern Conference and home pitch advantage in the playoffs' opening round. They lost to New York City FC 2-1 in a best-of-three series, which gives Charlotte a new goal for 2026 – advance to the second round for the first time in club history.

"It's building blocks," coach Dean Smith said at the start of training camp

last week. ... "I've walked off a pitch twice disappointed – once after the Orlando defeat in the playoffs and then, New York at home. We finished in the top four. We couldn't get it done and it's funny that when I look back and review the game at the end the last season, we actually went out the best we played in the playoff competition. Sometimes football can be cruel, but our aim is to



Smith

just keep getting better and pushing the standards that we've got so you

know that now is to win something." Most of the season-ending roster returns, and with it an understanding of Smith's philosophy and tactics. With a few tweaks, he believes Charlotte has the potential to accomplish more.

"I think the mentality is in a good place," Smith said. "There's not loads of turnover in terms of roster building, we've got the foundations of a really good team. I think we proved that last season, the regular season, and I think what we've done in the regular season we want to go further now. We want to go and build and win things and that's the important thing, so the mentality is

there."

Among the newcomers, midfielder Luca de la Torre has garnered the most attention. Charlotte signed de la Torre from San Diego FC on a permanent transfer from La Liga side Celta de Vigo for his ability to facilitate the attack as a central midfielder. With his abilities as an adept passer, de la Torre, a member of the U.S. national team, is expected to put scoring threats Pep Biel and Wilfried Zaha in position to attack.

"He's a player who connects," Smith said. "He can connect the ball from the back to the front, and I think that's

Please see **CHARLOTTE** | 6A

Lion kings: AFCON champ Senegal vs. USA in Charlotte

By Steve Goldberg
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The U.S. Men's National Team friendly against Senegal ahead of the FIFA World Cup, has just ratcheted up a few notches in degree of difficulty and notoriety.

The May 31 match at Bank of America Stadium will be the third of four World Cup tuneups, following games against big names Belgium (March 28) and Portugal (March 31) in Atlanta, and preced-

ing a final test against Germany (June 6) in Chicago.

Les Lions de la Teranga are now in rare air as the champions of Africa after beating host Morocco 1-0 on Jan. 18 in the Africa Cup of Nations final.

Pape Gueye scored the winner. The Lions are kings for the second time. They were runners-up in 2002 and 2019 before winning the continental tournament for the first time in 2021, their only previous title in 18

competitions. At the 2002 World Cup – Senegal's first – the Lions became just the second team from Africa to reach the quarter-finals, 12 years after Cameroon first accomplished the feat.

At the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, even with their biggest star Sadio Mané out due to injury, Senegal managed to progress from the group with wins over Qatar and Ecuador, following a 2-0 loss to the Netherlands. They lost 3-

0 to England in the Round of 16.

In a friendly last summer, Senegal avenged that loss with a 3-1 win against England in Nottingham, becoming the first African country to beat the Brits in a senior-level match.

In the 2026 FIFA World Cup, Senegal was drawn into Group I with France, Norway, and the winner of a playoff between Bolivia, Iraq, and Suriname.

Along with Mané, who scored 90

Please see **AFRICA** | 6A

Jersey retirement left Hornets' Curry speechless

By Cameron Williams
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Dell Curry's jersey number will be enshrined in the Spectrum Center rafters.

The former Hornets guard turned broadcaster's No. 30 will be officially retired on March 19, a decision the organization kept secret until releasing a video of the reveal. Curry's reactions were authentic.

"I never expected it," he said, "so, I just acted naturally. It means a lot. ... Overwhelmed is a good word, but it is hard to put into words what this truly means. It's not just a representation of me, but the fans, my family, my teammates and coaches. Everybody gets a piece of this."

Curry spent 10 years with the Hornets as a player and 15 more as a broadcaster and team ambassador. During his playing days, Curry became one of the best Hornets in franchise history, retiring as the team's leader in games played, points scored, field goals and three-pointers made. He still ranks in the top 10 in several statistical categories, including second in scoring with 9,839 points.

"As owners, we are committed to celebrat-

Please see **DELL** | 6A



CHARLOTTE HORNETS

Dell Curry, who retired as the Charlotte Hornets' all-time leading scorer with 9,839 points, will have his No. 30 jersey retired by the NBA team on March 19. His youngest son, Seth (right) wore the number with the Hornets from 2024-25.

Women fuel growth of Triangle flag football league, summit

By Herbert L. White
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Women's flag football is exploding.

Girls as young as 8 are playing the game, and sponsors and investors are taking notice.

BallHer's Choice Sports Flag Football has been on the forefront in the Triangle to engage girls and women in the sport. The league has hosted tournaments and clinics since its inception in 2023. Its theme is "Her Sports. Her Choice. Her Way."

BallHer's Choice Sports was founded by Maria Barber, the commissioner of the league. Barber is a social worker who got involved in flag football through a personal trainer de-

spite having no experience.

The league just finished its sixth season in the Triangle and has grown to nine teams.

Its Let Her Be Sports Summit 2026 for ages 13 and up is Jan. 31, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the OYM The Center in Raleigh. Registration is at www.eventbrite.com.

The networking summit will gather athletes, coaches and supporters to celebrate and encourage girls and women in all sports. Some of the topics covered will be career pathways, personal branding, eliminating barriers, athletic development and, of course, mental health. It's open to the beginner as well as the experienced athlete.

BallHer's Choice spring flag football league runs April 19-June 7 at Old Chapel Hill Road Park in Durham. The minimum age to participate is 17 and the maximum age is 65. Registration is ongoing at ballherschoicesports.com. Volunteers also are needed.

CIAA Hall of Fame

The CIAA released its 2026 HOF class, and while all nine are quite deserving, one name stood out for me.

Fred Whitted was as nice as he was passionate about preserving HBCU history. I put his death in my top 10 sports moments of 2025

Please see **CIAA** | 6A

McFadden takes over WCHS football

By Cameron Williams
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West Charlotte High didn't have to look far for its next head football coach.

D.J. McFadden, who coached Independence back to prominence, has been hired to coach

the Lions. McFadden, an Independence alumnus who coached his alma mater for five seasons, was the Patriots' starting quarterback in 2005 and 2006 when the program who state championships. As head coach, McFadden led the Patriots to the 4A West final in 2023 before losing to eventual state champion Weddington. Before taking over at Independence, the Patriots struggled to five straight losing seasons.

West Charlotte is two seasons removed from winning the 3A state title under former coach Sam Greiner, who was dismissed in December. The Lions lost in the 8A regional final to eventual state title winner Hough. Greiner helped bring the Lions back to prominence after years of struggle under multiple coaches. West Charlotte had three winless seasons between 2007-19 before he took over.



McFadden



FIFA

Senegal, which won the Africa Cup of Nations title with a 1-0 win against Morocco on Jan. 18, will play a pre-FIFA World Cup match against the United States on May 31 at Bank of America Stadium.

Africa champ Senegal takes on US in friendly

Continued from page 5A
goals in six seasons with Liverpool before heading to Bayern Munich and now Al Nassr in Saudi Arabia since 2023, the more well-known Lions include forward Nicolas Jackson, who is

now at Bayern after two seasons with Chelsea, and goalkeeper Edouard Mendy, who made 60 appearances for Chelsea before joining Al-Ahli (Saudi Arabia). They also have midfielder Pape Matar Sarr at Tottenham, and forward

Charlotte FC resumes the chase for tourney hardware

Continued from page 5A
something that we've missed at times. And he's really tidy on the ball as well. I think he'll be a really good signing for us."

Said de la Torre (Smith) thinks that the team can benefit a lot from a player like me with my abilities and ability to progress the ball, and that would fit in well with the setup."

Charlotte, which opens the season Feb. 21 at St. Louis City FC, can also benefit from Pep Biel's return after knee and hamstring injuries shelved him late last season. Biel, whose services were acquired from Olympiacos on a permanent transfer, is classified as a Designated Player through 2027, with a club option for an extra year. His 10 goals – tied for second on the team with Wilfried Zaha – and team-best 12 assists in 26 matches in 2025 made him one of 11 MLS players to reach the 10/10 plateau. After being sidelined for

the playoffs, Biel is eager to return to the field.

"I'm really excited, because for me, it was difficult time to be out because the thing I want is to play," he said, "but now I'm very hungry for the season."

Smith insists Charlotte FC's first-round exits don't create extra urgency for 2026. Although fans debate expectations, coaches and players tie their accomplishments to outcomes.

"There's much pressure, because there's always pressure when you when you're a head coach of a team, there's always pressure because you have to win football games, and you know that's really important, that you understand that," he said. "I don't set targets of Supporters Shield or MLS Cup, or U.S. Open, or Leagues Cup, because you're trying to win all of them. You try and win whichever competition that you go into, so you know that pressure will always be intrinsic."

Dell Curry's No. 30 jersey retirement was a surprise

Continued from page 5A

ing our Hornets legacy and recognizing those who helped build the foundation of this franchise," Hornets co-chairs Rick Schnall and Gabe Plotkin said. "Dell Curry has been a cornerstone of the Charlotte Hornets for more than 25 years – both on and off the court. He exemplifies what it means to be a Hornet through his professionalism, work ethic and commitment to excellence. Dell's impact on our organization, our fans and our community is undeniable, and he is truly deserving of this honor."

Curry's 30 will join Bobby Phills' 13 as the Hornets' retired jersey numbers. Curry said he would always notice players' retired numbers in the rafters at other arenas, but now he really pays added attention. To be one of them, it means a lot.

Curry, who wore No. 30 in high school, didn't wear it at the McDonald's All-American game because it was unavailable, so he opted for 15. He planned on wearing 15 at Virginia Tech, too, but a senior teammate already had that number, so back to 30 it was.

Curry's son Stephen, a multi-time NBA champion and former MVP with the Golden State Warriors, also wears 30. Younger son Seth, Stephen's Warriors teammate, wore the number with the Hornets in 2024-25 before transitioning to 31 in Golden State. There has been speculation for years that Stephen might close his career in Charlotte, and if that were to happen, Dell said he would gladly give the number to him.

"He asked me about that already," the elder Curry said. "Yeah, we would take it down for that, no doubt."

The retirement ceremony will be at half-time of the Hornets game against the Orlando Magic. Curry said as the day gets closer, he's sure it will start feeling more surreal.

"I've seen a lot of jersey ceremonies and I think, 'What does that feel like,'" Curry said. "I know what it felt like when I was told this was going to happen, but I have no idea what it's going to feel like when it actually does happen. I'll try to stay as calm as I can, but it's going to be a big moment for sure."



HERBERT L. WHITE | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Longtime Johnson C. Smith public address announcer Otis Stroud is one of nine 2026 inductees to the CIAA Hall of Fame.

CIAA Hall of Fame class of '26

Continued from page 5A

because that's just how special he was.

Fred loved HBCUs, he loved his alma mater, Winston-Salem State, and he loved history. I still have one of the first Black College Sports Encyclopedias he published back when the CIAA Tournament was in Raleigh. It is priceless.

We sat together at so many tournaments and talked for hours. If a player scored so many points or grabbed a bunch of rebounds, Fred would say, "that's not a record. (Fill in the blank) holds the record."

Everybody, and I mean E-V-E-R-Y-B-O-D-Y called Fred for information. When ESPN produced the documentary "Black Magic," detailing the history of CIAA basketball,

producers knew who to call.

How sad that he's not here to accept an honor long overdue.

The remaining eight:

- Jerome "Biggie" Bell Sr., Virginia State (1974-79): Bell is VSU's all-time leader in career assists, single-season assists and single-game assists.
- Andrea Giscombe, St. Augustine's (1996-97): CIAA and NCAA national track and field champion, and she helped coach the Falcons to 21 national titles and 79 CIAA championships under legendary coach George Williams.
- Akira Turner, Fayetteville State (2010-11): One of the most decorated bowlers in CIAA history.
- Otis Stroud, Johnson C. Smith: Four decades of announcing CIAA games and

tournaments. What a voice!

· Ralph "Pete" Hunter, Virginia Union: A dominant defensive back and the only Division II player drafted in the 2002 NFL Draft.

· Donald Ware, football officiating: No, not Donal Ware (no D on the end) of Boxtorow.com. This Ware was a 31-year conference official, and he still has his sanity.

· George Leonard, Virginia State (1976-79): Leonard graduated as the program's all-time rushing leader with 3,575 yards and 33 touchdowns.

· Charlie Neal: Jimmy Jenkins Legacy Award Recipient: There are not enough words to describe Neal. Google.

Bonitta Best is sports editor at The Triangle Tribune in Durham.

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