



Answers to the  
enigma that is Bryce  
Young will develop  
in training camp

THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY SINCE 1906

# The Charlotte Post

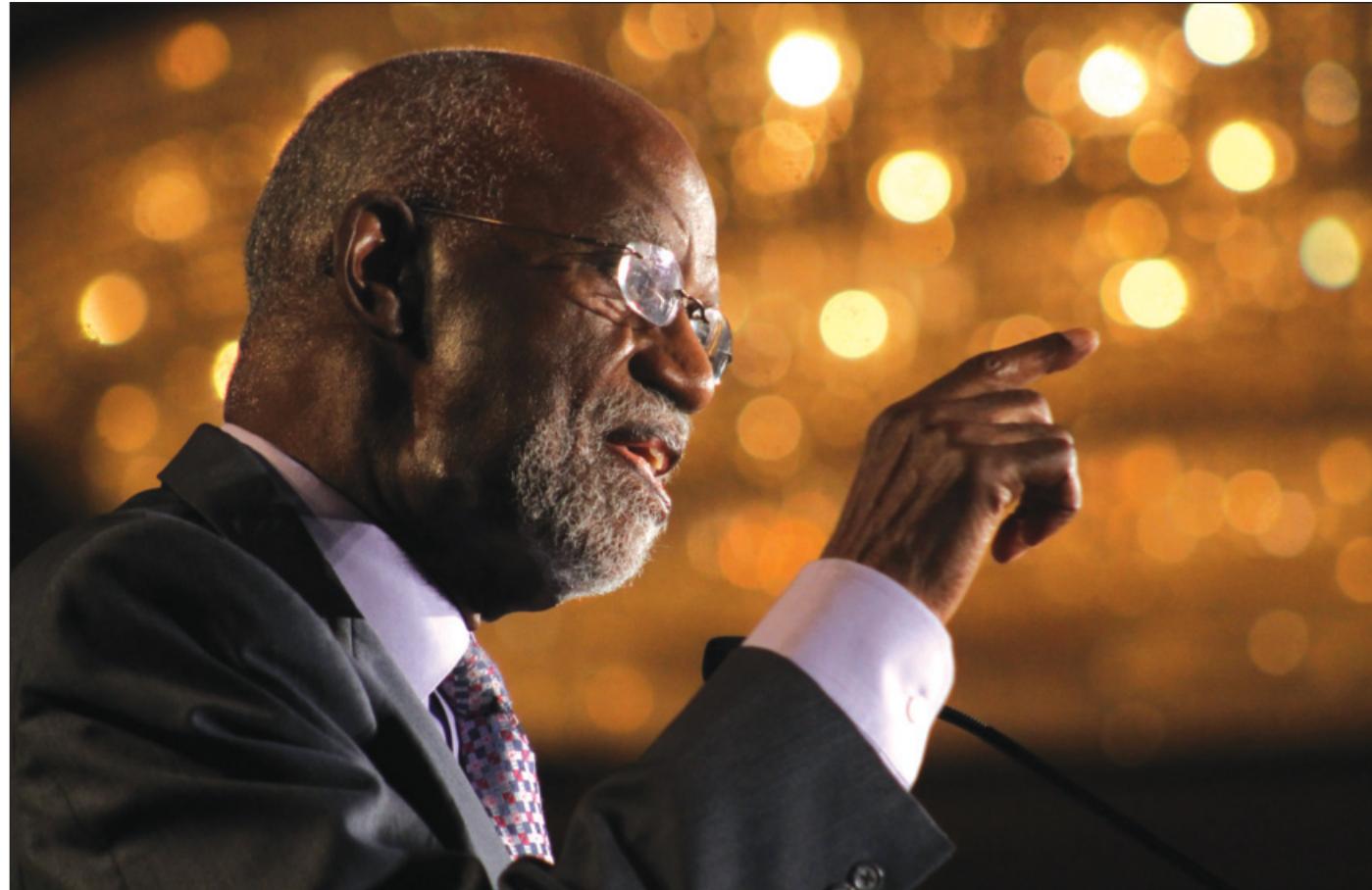
WEEK OF JULY 24, 2025

VOLUME 51 NUMBER 46

WWW.THECHARLOTTEPOST.COM

\$1.50

## «APPRECIATION



DANIEL COSTON | THE CHARLOTTE POST

James Ferguson II, who along with law partner Julius Chambers successfully argued for busing as a tool to desegregate public schools in the 1971 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* decision, has died at age 82. Mr. Ferguson launched North Carolina's first multiracial law firm in 1967 with Chambers and Adam Stein.

## James Ferguson's legacy: 'Equality – for everybody'

Civil rights attorney won Swann case, exoneration for the Wilmington 10

By Herbert L. White  
[herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com](mailto:herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com)

James Ferguson II, a legendary civil rights attorney whose legal victories included the use of busing to desegregate public schools, has died at age 82.

Mr. Ferguson, along with law partner Julius Chambers, successfully argued the historic 1971 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* case that opened the door for busing as a tool to desegregate public school campuses. The United States Supreme Court sided with Darius and Vera Swann, who argued the school district was not doing enough

to desegregate its campuses.

During the case, Ferguson's law office was set ablaze by an arsonist.

"I just want to feel that I've done all I can do to bring about equality – for everybody," Ferguson told The Post in 2016. "That's what life is about – trying to create the society we think we want."

Mr. Ferguson, who opened a one-man practice on East Trade Street in 1964, joined forces with Chambers and Adam Stein three years later to launch North Carolina's first multiracial law firm, Ferguson Stein Chambers. The firm is now known as Ferguson Chambers & Sumter.

Among Mr. Ferguson's noteworthy legal wins were pardons for the Wilmington 10 more than four decades after the civil rights activists were convicted of arson in the 1971 firebombing of a supermarket. He also represented the Charlotte 3.

His work also took him to South Africa in the 1980s, where he trained lawyers during the apartheid regime where Black people were relegated to second-class citizenship.

Mr. Ferguson, known as "Fergie" to friends, said he realized he wanted to practice law in 1960 as a high school

Please see JAMES FERGUSON | 2A

## NC Senate to vote on veto overrides against DEI and concealed guns

By Galen Bacharier  
[NC NEWSLINE](#)

Republicans in the North Carolina Senate will vote to override Gov. Josh Stein's vetoes next week, Senate leader Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) said Monday.

Stein, a Democrat, has issued seven vetoes on bills that originated in the Senate. Among them allow permitless carry of handguns, two new immigration enforcement measures, two banning diversity, equity and inclusion practices in schools and a rollback of an emissions goal for Duke Energy.

Berger, in a news release, said Stein's vetoes indicate "that he is out of touch with the people of North Carolina."

"I look forward to leading Senate Republicans in overriding these harmful vetoes and putting North Carolina families first," Berger said.

Veto overrides require approval from three-fifths of members in both chambers. Senate Republicans, who hold a 30-20 veto-proof supermajority, will meet that threshold if all members are present and voting.

The vote counting is more precarious in the House, where the GOP holds a 71-49 advantage. Speaker Destin Hall (R-Caldwell) has said the override motions can be called up at any time when the House is in session. But all Republicans, as well as one Democrat, will need to vote yes to confirm an override, if all members are present and voting.



St. Augustine's University is reaching out to alumni for support after the Raleigh school was removed as a member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

## St. Augustine's University reaches out to alumni after accreditation loss

By Alex Bass  
[THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE](#)

RALEIGH – Saint Augustine's University administrators held a virtual forum with alumni last week following the announcement of the school's loss of accreditation after arbitration and removal from membership among the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

The forum – joined by over 200 people – included SAU Interim Pres-

ident Marcus Burgess, Board of Trustees chairman Brian Boulware, interim provost and vice president of academic affairs Verjanis Peoples, and vice president of finance and administration Mark Yates, among others.

"They need money for this lawsuit," said SaveSAU Coalition chairman Ben Johnson, as his explanation for the meeting's bottom line. Litigation is SAU's lone remaining option for long

Please see SAU | 2A

## CMPD eyes drone expansion initiative

*Police cite efficiency, but concerns over civil liberties are prevalent*

By Misha Torian  
[FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST](#)

A Charlotte-Mecklenburg police plan to incorporate drones into law enforcement reflects a growing trend nationwide.

According to an online listing uploaded to a state government portal on May 30, the city will solicit proposals from drone companies the CMPD's aerial surveillance initiative. The bid officially opened July 1. The listing states CMPD will use drones for "rapid deployment in emergency situations, surveillance, search and rescue, traffic management, and crime scene monitoring."

The department says adding drones to its technology arsenal will "enhance public safety, improve response times, and optimize situational awareness during critical incidents."

California-based drone manufacturer Skydio is among the companies expected to submit a proposal. A spokesperson for Skydio confirmed that Charlotte has not provided specifics beyond the public bid description.

"Drone first responder programs are transforming public safety by giving agencies faster access to the information they need to make better decisions in real time," said Daniel Garay, Skydio's director of public safety solutions.

At a January community event, CMPD Chief Johnny Jennings shared the department's vision of

Please see CMPD | 2A

## NC property tax relief unlikely

By Greg Childress  
[NC NEWSLINE](#)

Despite bipartisan support for bills to expand the state's property tax relief programs for elderly and disabled North Carolinians, there's unlikely to be movement on the legislation this year.

State lawmakers have gotten an earful from senior citizens and others on fixed incomes who worry that rising property taxes across the state will make it impossible for them to remain in their homes.

"I think that the concern that members are having is that if the General Assembly passes some large property tax relief exemption without providing any kind of corresponding source of revenues that counties are going to be facing budget shortfalls of their own and having to make rather drastic cuts for services," said Rep. Tim Longest (D-Wake), who supports additional property tax relief.

Longest noted that the House's version of the budget pauses scheduled income tax cuts, which he said would offset revenue counties would lose if eligibility for homestead exemption programs is expanded to allow more people to qualify.

"We can't cut our way to revenue, and if we want to ensure fairness for older people and people with disabilities, people that can't afford their homes, then we need to

Please see NC PROPERTY | 3A

## STAY IN TOUCH

Snapchat: thecharpost  
X: @thecharpost  
Facebook: The Charlotte Post  
Instagram: @thecharlottepost



#PaperThursday

## INSIDE

Sports 5A  
Life 1B  
A&E 5B  
Classified 4B

Digital edition:  
[www.thecharlottepostnewspaper.com](#)

To subscribe: (704) 376-0496 or online  
[http://tcpcc.com/Subscribe](#)

Please  
Recycle



## James Ferguson fought for society's underdogs

Continued from page 1A

senior. As a student advocate for civil rights in segregated Asheville, Mr. Ferguson and his peers consulted the city's two Black lawyers for advice. The attorneys promised to help whenever they could.

"It hit me that that was a wonderful position to be in," Mr. Ferguson recalled. "I knew I wanted to be in a position to bring about community change."

Mr. Ferguson took on high profile civil rights cases in the 1970s as North Carolina became a hotbed of cases. In addition to the Wilmington 10, who earned pardons from Gov. Beverly Perdue, he represented the Charlotte 3 - T.J. Reddy, James Grant, and Charles Parker - who were convicted in 1971 for the burning of Lazy B Stables three years earlier. The Lazy B was desegregated in 1967.

Gov. Jim Hunt commuted their sentences in 1979.

Mr. Ferguson also represented Daryl Hunt, a Black man from Winston-Salem who was wrongfully convicted in 1984 and sentenced to life imprisonment for the rape and the murder of Deborah Sykes, a white newspaper copy editor. The introduction of DNA evidence and confession by Willard

Brown to the crimes led to Hunt's exoneration.

"Never give up and never take things personally," Mel Watt, an attorney at Ferguson's firm before leaving in 1993 when he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, recalled in 2016. "Practicing civil rights is just hard and difficult. Fergie has managed to keep his freshness and his commitment going despite the trials and tribulations."

Mr. Ferguson often took on cases that looked like sure losers during a time when courts were often hostile to judges and political forces, such as lawsuits to ensure racial equity in public schools.

"Fergie would take on the unpopular cause with a zeal that is almost unnatural," Frank Emory, an attorney at Ferguson's firm in the 1980s. "I think of his courage in every sense of the word."

Courage, Mr. Ferguson maintained, is a matter of perspective.

"You look at a situation, you see what needs to be done and then you do it," he said. "You never give a lot of thought to the risk. If you spend your time weighing the risk, you never get much done."



Charlotte-Mecklenburg police turn toward drones as a surveillance and emergency deployment tool follows a national trend, but civil liberties advocates fear abuses of individual rights.

## CMPD eyes greater use of drones in law enforcement

Continued from page 1A

drones as first responders, emphasizing that policies would be in place to prevent abuse of the technology.

Police departments across the United States have increased their use of drones. Similar programs are already active in cities like Scottsdale, Arizona, where police say drones can reach any destination within city limits in under 85 seconds. In those programs, drones are often stationed on rooftops of police and fire departments, ready for deployment. Live video feeds are reviewed in real time by specialized teams in CMPD's case, at the department's Real Time Crime Center, which also has access to more than 4,500 public and private security cameras throughout Charlotte.

CMPD is simultaneously expanding its Connect Charlotte initiative, encouraging residents and businesses to register their own security cameras with the department. According to the city's website, the program currently includes 1,383 registered cameras and 919 integrated feeds. While CMPD does not have direct access to private live video, registration allows investigators to request footage if an incident occurs nearby.

According to the National Police Foundation Report, "Drones can act as first responders, allowing officers to assess situations faster and more safely, which can save lives and reduce risk to both the public and officers."

Charlotte is not alone in adopting drone technology. Monroe police recently partnered with Texas-based company Paladin to add drones to its operations. In June, Monroe police used a drone to successfully track down a violent suspect who fled into a wooded area.

Nationally, the use of drones by police has surged. As of 2023, more than 1,500 law enforcement agencies across the U.S. were using drones according to the Center for the Study of the Drone at Bard College. That's up from 300 in 2016 when the Federal Aviation Administration first issued regulations for public safety drone operations.

Law enforcement leaders contend drones offer quicker response times, safer suspect apprehensions, and enhanced situational awareness, especially during large public events, protests, or emergencies.

"You'll probably see it a whole lot on game day operations, crowd control, or if we have anything unusual going on we'll put it up in the air to monitor crowds and make sure there are no threats in the area," CMPD Captain James Pescia said.

While police highlight safety benefits, the rapid expansion of drone surveillance has raised concerns among civil rights advocates and privacy groups.

Beryl Lipton, senior investigative researcher at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, said the expansion of drone

surveillance poses serious risks to privacy and civil liberties, especially for people who are not under suspicion.

"In general, mass surveillance—collecting information, getting up in the business of people who are not committing crimes—is already a violation," she said. "We've seen law enforcement use drones to surveil protests, monitor unhoused individuals, or respond to situations that aren't dangerous situations."

Lipton added that drones can capture images the human eye cannot, such as backyards, rooftops, and decks.

"They're collecting footage along the way," she said. "We have this infrastructure of police surveillance technology now that makes it very easy to both add additional equipment to a drone and it makes it very easy to look back at historical drone footage and use that for purposes that we didn't have in mind initially. For example, we're seeing people adding license plate readers to drones. License plate readers are just collecting information about where people have been, where their car has been, where they drive, where they go, just constantly."

"It doesn't serve any investigative purpose it just sits there being vulnerable to hackers, being vulnerable to bad actors within the police department and sort of creating a pattern of life about individuals that doesn't need to exist at all."

In Charlotte, more than 35% of the population is Black, and community advocates have called for greater transparency and accountability in how new policing technologies are deployed, particularly given past tensions between CMPD and residents of color.

A 2023 report from the American Civil Liberties Union cautioned that widespread aerial surveillance could disproportionately impact Black and Brown communities, which are already more likely to face over-policing. Critics also warn that drone surveillance could be used to monitor protests, religious gatherings, and other constitutionally protected activities.

According to the EFF, "Drones can act as first responders, allowing officers to assess situations faster and more safely, which can save lives and reduce risk to both the public and officers." Lipton, though, urges proactive transparency and internal oversight to protect civil rights.

"There are police departments that post every drone flight path and what crime it was responding to," she said. "There needs to be internal audits, regular deletion of unnecessary footage, and accountability measures to catch misuse. If there is an abuse of this type of powerful surveillance tool, it is more often than not going to result in any accountability for the police officer. I think making sure that they have ways that they are going to regulate internally how this sort of tool can be used is super important."

## SAU explores options

Continued from page 1A  
term SACSCOC reinstatement.

Burgess, who did not respond to a Tribune text message Monday, issued a July 14 letter to SACSCOC President Belle Wheelan and indicated SAU's intent to pursue litigation. The university will remain accredited on probation for good cause through the litigation.

"They can get funds from the federal government, and all of those things," SACSCOC public relations and data specialist Janea Johnson said of privileges due SACSCOC-accredited institutions.

"SAU is not closing - our doors remain open, and classes will continue," Burgess said in a July 14 press release. "Fall 2025 classes will commence virtually as scheduled for both new and returning students." A fall calendar is not posted in the website's "Academic Calendar" section.

"This legal action will effectively extend SAU's accredited status during the transition period, ensuring that current and future graduates receive their degrees from an institution that is accredited," the release stated.

Transitioning to another accrediting entity - like Bennett College in Greensboro - moved from SACSCOC to the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools - could be an option.

Bennett's transition to full TRACS membership in April 2023 took four years following the school's February 2019 SACSCOC membership revocation and subsequent litigation. Bennett exceeded a \$5 million fundraising goal in February 2019. SAU has no such known donations on the immediate horizon.

SAU has a \$30 million credit line, albeit with a 26% interest rate, with Gothic Ventures. The uni-

versity approximated the forthcoming litigation's total cost to be \$1 million, with a \$350,000 attorney retainer fee. "Why do they need to ask alumni for money," Johnson said.

SAU, per SACSCOC policy, will be responsible for SACSCOC's legal fees.

"These costs must be paid in full within 45 days following the institution's receipt of SACSCOC's invoice, unless other arrangements are approved by the Executive Council acting on behalf of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees," SACSCOC policy states. The same press release invited contributions to the Falcon Pride Initiative for said legal fees.

Johnson said Burgess indicated about 10 SAU students are on course to graduate in the fall and spring terms. These class sizes would represent roughly 40% of SAU's graduating classes last fall and spring.

## Equity rollbacks and erasures threaten Black Americans

By Herbert L. White

herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Rollbacks of racial equity initiatives and even U.S. history is challenging democracy with erasure.

The National Urban League's 2025 State of Black America report, titled "State of Emergency: Civil Rights, Democracy & Progress Under Attack," outlines threats to foundational democracy as well as active resistance.

"Across courtrooms and classrooms, from statehouses to boardrooms, a new generation of leaders is rising to defend the gains we've made and push for the progress still to come," NUL President Marc H. Morial said in a statement. "The work is difficult. The road is long. But we know from experience that the arc of history does not bend toward justice on its own—it must be bent by those with the strength and will to see it through."

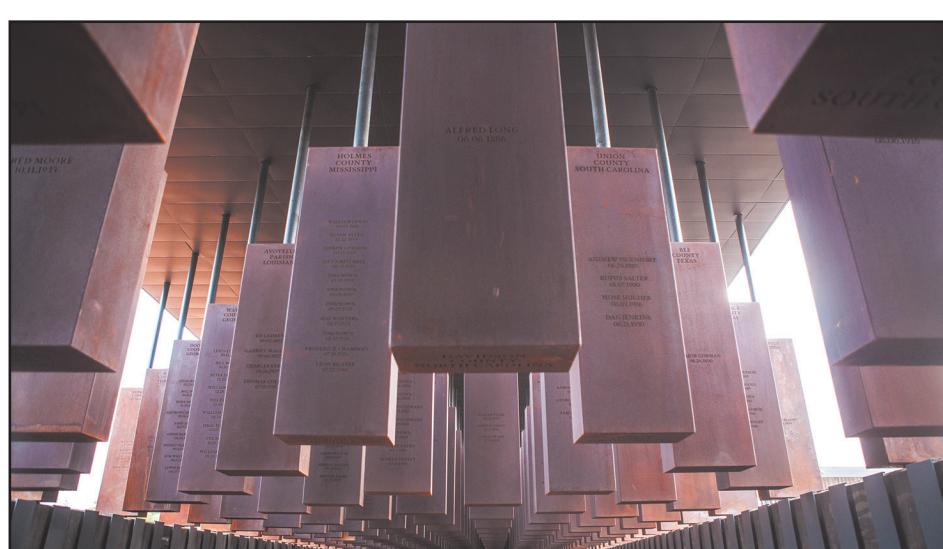
The report covers deliberate, coordinated initiatives boosted and launched by President Donald Trump and Republican

lawmakers to reverse racial progress. Since returning to office in January, Trump ordered the dismantling and defunding of federal departments that oversee civil rights and voting rights protections as well as the end of diversity programs. In addition to reversing civil rights and equity gains on the federal level, social acceptance has waned as hate speech has increased, sparked in part through social media platforms that have rolled back safety policies.

The State of Black America report is an annual assessment of the economic, social, and political status of Black Americans.

Contributors to the report range from civil rights leaders and elected officials.

"This is not business as usual," Morial said. "This is an emergency. The National Urban League urges vigilance, mobilization, solidarity and support. This year's State of Black America is a call to action to stand together as we defend our rights and the principles of American democracy in our courts, our communities, and our coalitions."



Charlotte is a New South city. It also has a history of racial terrorism lynching of Black people. Join The Post and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Remembrance Project for a free public panel discussion

## Knowing, and Healing, Through History

July 24  
6-7:30 p.m.  
Allegra Westbrooks Regional Branch  
Library  
2412 Beatties Ford Road

The forum, in collaboration with the Equal Justice Initiative, seeks to tell the truth about two racial terror lynchings in Mecklenburg County - Willie McDaniel and Joe McNeely - and to memorialize these men. A free, public soil-collection ceremony for Willie McDaniel will be held at Reedy Creek Park and Nature Preserve at a date to be announced. See [ItHappenedHereCLT.com](http://ItHappenedHereCLT.com) for details.



The Charlotte Post



Registration is encouraged at [bit.ly/3GSzXJa](http://bit.ly/3GSzXJa)

# NC property tax relief legislation is unlikely

Continued from page 1A

make sure that that loss of revenue is offset somewhere else," Longest said.

The N.C. Association of County Commissioners, a nonpartisan organization that serves as the official voice of the state's 100 counties, opposes property tax relief legislation, citing concerns about revenue losses for counties.

In a March letter to the General Assembly, Kevin Leonard, the NCACC's executive director, wrote that local leaders agree that relief is needed but that mandating property tax exemptions at the state level is not the answer.

"If these bills pass as currently drafted, they would create an unfunded mandate on counties," Leonard said. "Because counties have limited options to generate revenue — primarily relying on property and sales taxes — the revenue lost due to these exemptions would have to be offset through other means."

Counties would be forced to raise taxes on property owners or cut critical services such as public safety, social services or disaster recovery efforts, Leonard said.

"While all counties would face these decisions, the impact would be more severe for counties affected by Tropical Storm Helene," Leonard said. "These counties already face reduced property tax revenue for FY 2025-26 and beyond because real property that was damaged and not repaired or replaced as of January 1, 2025, will be excluded from the tax base for the upcoming year."

Rising property tax rates in the state's urban areas such as Mecklenburg, Wake, Durham and Orange counties are a big concern for senior citizens fighting to stay in their homes amid rising tax bills.

Rep. Erin Paré (R-Wake) said she believes the General Assembly still has an appetite to provide relief for citizens struggling to pay high property taxes.

"I'm still waiting to see if the finance chairs are going to take a vote on any piece of legislation dealing with this issue in the House, but it's my understanding that this is widely supported among the members of the House to do something about the issue," Paré said.

Paré is a sponsor of House Bill 59, which would expand homestead ex-

clusions for the elderly and disabled. Senate Bill 349 would provide similar relief.

North Carolina currently offers three property tax relief programs for qualified homeowners that are administered by counties:

\* The Elderly/Disabled Homestead Exemption is for residents 65 years or older or those who are totally and permanently disabled. The program excludes from taxes the greater of \$25,000 or 50% of the assessed value of the owner's permanent residence. To qualify, income for the preceding year must be \$37,900 or less, including both incomes for a married couple.

\* The "Circuit Breaker" limits the amount of annual property taxes the owner pays on their permanent residence. Eligibility is limited to homeowners who are 65 and older or who are totally and permanently disabled. The tax bill is limited to a fixed percentage of income, and any taxes owed above that limit is deferred until a "disqualifying event" such as the owner's death. This program requires a new application to be filed every year.

\* The Disabled Veteran Exclusion program excludes up to the first \$45,000 of the appraised value of the permanent residence of a disabled veteran who has a total and permanent service-connected disability or who received benefits for specially adapted housing. There is no age or income limitation for this program.

Paré said it's time to modify the \$37,900 income limit for the elderly/disabled exemption, so more people qualify.

"That's just not realistic," Paré said. I think that with the cost of living in some of the more high cost-of-living counties, that just seems ridiculous."

A proposed amended version of HB 59 offered up last month during a bill discussion in the House Committee on Pensions and Retirement would link eligibility for the age/disability exemption to a county's area median income. Doing so, she said, would ease the burden on low wealth counties.

"That's the most accurate way to do it," Paré said. "I would just say that the only alternative would be for towns to budget differently and take the tax burden down for everybody, which I think is a good thing."



STOCK PHOTO

A federal judge appointed by President Donald Trump blocked the removal of medical debt from credit reports, exposing an estimated 15 million Americans to additional financial burden.

## Black Americans hit hard as medical debt rule tossed

By Stacy M. Brown

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

A Trump-appointed federal judge has blocked a key rule that would have removed medical debt from the credit reports of roughly 15 million Americans, dealing a harsh blow to struggling families already burdened by the high cost of health care, particularly Black Americans.

The ruling by Judge Sean Jordan of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas vacated the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's rule issued in January under the Biden administration. The judge sided with credit reporting industry groups, who argued that the CFPB had exceeded its authority under the Fair Credit Reporting Act. The decision halts a rule that had not yet taken effect and was designed to prevent medical debt, which is often the result of billing errors, insurance disputes, or unavoidable emergencies — from dragging down a person's credit score.

Julie Margetta Morgan, former CFPB official and now president of The Century Foundation, told CBS MoneyWatch that medical debt "doesn't show whether [someone is] likely to pay their mortgage or other debts." The court decision effectively slams the door to that reform.

According to the Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker, nearly 20 million adults in the U.S. owe medical debt, with a total estimated at \$220 billion. Among them, 3 million people owe more than \$10,000. That burden is not shared equally: 13% of Black Americans report having medical debt, compared to 8% of white Americans and 3% of Asian Americans.

Medical debt also disproportionately affects women, people with disabilities, and those living in the South and rural areas. In addition, more than half of all collec-

tion items on credit reports are for medical bills, according to the CFPB. While private credit bureaus like Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion have taken limited steps — such as removing medical collections under \$500 — consumer advocates note these changes fall short of true relief, especially for low-income households and communities of color.

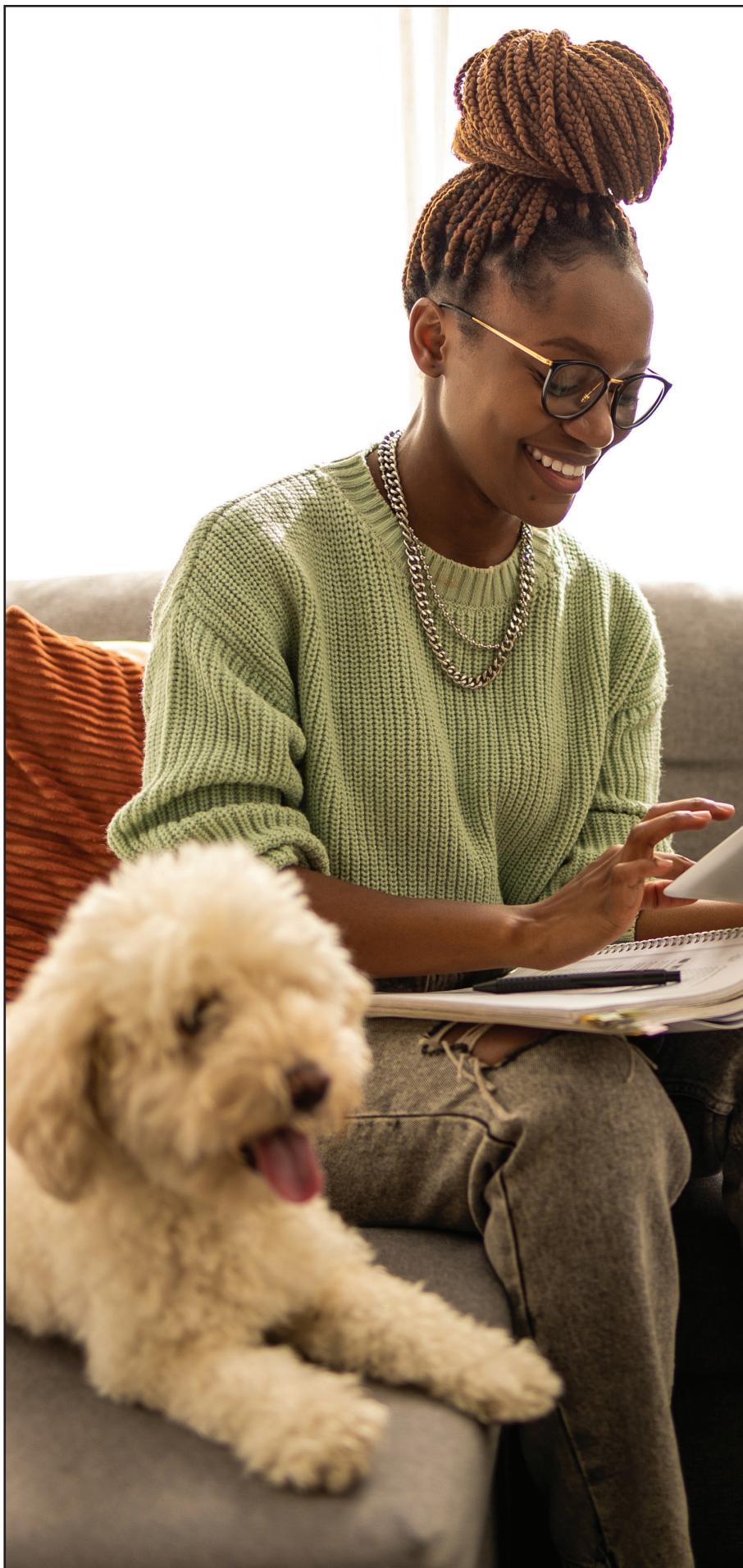
Medical debt has lasting effects: KFF polling shows people with such debt often cut back on food, clothing, and other essentials, drain savings, borrow from friends and family, or skip needed care entirely. For many, even those with health insurance, a serious illness or emergency can trigger financial ruin.

The Biden administration's now-blocked rule aimed to address this by recognizing that medical debt is not a reliable indicator of financial behavior and should not influence credit scores. But that rule was effectively frozen after Trump reinstalled Russ Vought — a fierce critic of the CFPB — as acting director in February.

Vought promptly issued a directive halting new rules and investigations, leaving the agency in a state of paralysis. With 20% of Americans having at least one medical debt collection on their credit report, and with Black communities most likely to carry that debt, the ruling stands as a glaring example of policy decisions with racial and economic consequences.

States like Colorado and New York have taken steps to protect consumers, but without federal backing, millions remain exposed.

"There are a lot of flaws in our medical billing and reporting system, and it lands in the consumer's lap," Margetta Morgan said.



Get Up To  
**\$5,000**  
For Down Payment &  
Closing Costs<sup>1</sup>

The Opportunity Advantage Loan  
Fund is a forgivable loan with  
**no repayment and 0% interest** if you  
own the home for at least 5 years.<sup>2</sup>



**SouthState**

866.229.5628  
Mortgage@SouthStateBank.com  
SouthStateBank.com/CharlottePost

All loans are subject to credit approval and program guidelines. SouthState Bank N.A. NMLS ID #403455. Member FDIC. Equal Housing Lender. 1. Funds subject to availability. Applicant income must be 80% or less of the county area median income (AMI) adjusted for family size. Applicant must qualify for Buyer's Advantage, Community Advantage, USDA HomeReady® or Home Possible® mortgage. 2. Each year a portion of the loan is forgiven, a 1099-C will be issued by SouthState for 1/5 of the forgivable loan amount. The loan funds may be considered taxable income. Consult your tax advisor. If prior to the fifth anniversary of the Note, all or any part of the Property or an interest therein is sold or transferred by Borrower to any person or entity without Lender's prior written consent, it shall be an event of default ("Event of Default"). Lender may, upon an Event of Default, at Lender's option, declare all the unforgiven, outstanding sums due under the Note and secured by the Security Instrument to be immediately due and payable.

# The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

Gerald O. Johnson | CEO/PUBLISHER

gerald.johnson@thecharlottepost.com

André P. Johnson | CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

andre.johnson@thecharlottepost.com

Herbert L. White | EDITOR IN CHIEF

herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Published weekly by The Charlotte Post Publishing Company Inc., 5118 Princess Street, Charlotte, NC 28269 (USPS #965500). Subscription is \$65 per year. Periodicals postage paid at Charlotte, NC. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Charlotte Post, PO Box 30144, Charlotte, NC 28230

## Black conventions not inviting Trump grows in number

By April Ryan  
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

The National Association of Black Journalists says it is "not" extending an invitation to President Donald Trump for its annual convention in Cleveland in August.

The association's president, Ken Lemon, a reporter at WSOC-TV in Charlotte said, "The focus of this year's convention is the organization's 50th anniversary" as a Black journalists' advocacy group.

Lemon, who spoke by phone to Black Press USA, added "at this point, there is not a reason to invite President Trump this year." Last year was a hard-fought presidential campaign year, he added, where "journalists had the opportunity to vet the candidate. I don't see the need to do that this time around."

The irony for NABJ convention-goers and other Black journalists is that they have witnessed a significant percentage of the organization's membership lose jobs in the media industry as a direct result of the Trump administration's anti-DEI stance. In addition to job losses, hiring freezes, decreased opportunity for workplace promotion, and increased restraints on editorial content and subject matter have become the new normal for many Black journalists — and journalists at large.

NABJ has a long history of inviting the sitting president to speak to its membership. Past invitees include then-President Bill Clinton, who accepted their invitation and attended a convention.

The NAACP announced in June it wouldn't invite Trump to its Charlotte convention, which was held last week.

The National Urban League is also not interested in having Trump appear at its convention in Cleveland next week. Marc Morial, president of the civil rights organization, said one reason for the non-invite is that they have invited Trump to their convention five times during his previous administration, and he did not respond. Morial says the other reason is what happened with Trump and Black Journalists at last year's NABJ convention.

That NABJ convention is where Trump infamously failed to fully comprehend the complexities of race in America and how they apply to then-Vice President Kamala Harris. Trump controversially stated that Harris had "all of a sudden turned Black."

Erin Haines, who is one of several candidates challenging Lemon for the top seat at the NABJ, was asked if President Trump did any damage as a result of last year's NABJ appearance. She replied, "He did damage to Black journalists and to Black America. And the way that interview was executed was not the opportunity for our membership that it was for him as a candidate."

When asked about the decision not to invite the president, Dion Rabouin, who is also seeking the NABJ's top post, said, "It makes sense, the way this administration has operated and the way it has dealt with Black journalists and Black people overall."

"And also," said Haines, "I lament that Vice President Harris, as the Democratic nominee, was not allowed to address our membership in the same week during our convention, even though she would have had to participate virtually, I think it still would have been a member benefit and something that should have been allowed in such a hugely consequential election."

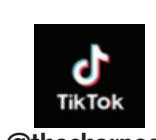
Follow The Post on social media



@thecharpost



The Charlotte Post



@thecharpost



thecharpost

## Residents, businesses respond to Chantal's damage across central North Carolina

By Alex Bass

THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

DURHAM — Durham Mayor Leo Williams saw and heard just what he needed to in the Rippling Stream Road area of the Old Farm neighborhood after Tropical Storm Chantal. "That just gave me so much hope to see people smiling in a crisis situ-

ation," Williams said, recalling words he heard from residents. "We're all right. We're going to be alright."

Chantal induced parts of the Eno River to surpass a level last seen during Hurricane Fran in 1996. "This time, it got out of its banks," said David Swain, Durham's deputy fire chief of emergency operations.

"It was moving pretty fast, like the rapids of a river."

Williams noted the active presence of the Durham Fire Department and the American Red Cross, and asked what he could do. "Can you ask everyone to call 1-800-RED CROSS (733-2767)" Williams was told. An integrated network of municipal, civic and church groups activated

collaborative activities. Emmanuel AME Church opened as a Red Cross shelter.

"We're helping people with their emergency supplies, giving them a place to sleep and helping them figure out next steps," said Kelly Flynn, the Red Cross' regional director of communications. "We will continue to keep it

open as the community needs it."

Durham Public Schools athletics director David Hackney said he has not been notified of any athletics facilities issues. Beyond Durham, six other counties, Flynn said - Alamance, Chatham, Lee, Moore, Orange and Person - have homes that were evacuated. More than 60

Chapel Hill residents had to leave their homes and were transported to a safe shelter.

Public art was decimated at the Eno Arts Mill, now closed "indefinitely," per its Facebook page. That same July 7 Facebook post continued: "It's truly beyond words, and it feels strange to be juggling such gratitude with sorrow."

## Protect personalized ads for business

In today's digital economy, attention is currency — and as a small business owner and media buyer, I know firsthand how hard it can be to capture the right audience at the right time with the right message.

That's why Meta's AI-driven personalized ad tools have become a cornerstone of how I help my clients grow and compete in a crowded market.

These tools aren't just helpful — they're transformative. They allow small businesses like mine to create tailored ad experiences that resonate deeply with the people who actually want to engage. We're not just "running ads." We're building connections, sparking action, and scaling results that were once out of reach for businesses without enterprise-level budgets.

These tools allow me to do what used to take a full-

time team — at a fraction of the cost — while offering data-backed strategies that get results for every client I serve.

That's why I didn't hesitate when I had the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., to speak directly with North Carolina legislators. I joined other small business leaders to advocate for something simple but critical: protecting the technology that helps us succeed.

We shared real stories — not hypotheticals — about how AI tools from Meta have made business growth attainable, sustainable, and scalable. These aren't "nice to have" tools.

For many of us, they're the reason we're still in business at all.

There's growing debate in Congress about how to regulate artificial intelligence — and rightly so. Guardrails are necessary to ensure transparency and ethical use. But we must also protect access to AI technologies that empower

small businesses and level the economic playing field.

Blanket restrictions on personalized advertising or AI-assisted marketing tools could unintentionally hurt the very businesses lawmakers aim to support. AI doesn't just help big corporations scale — it gives small agencies and entrepreneurs the precision and power we need to compete.

If we want to keep innovation accessible to everyone, we need legislation that protects and preserves ethical, data-responsible AI for small business growth.

Meta's AI-powered ad tools don't replace human creativity — they enhance it. They help us connect with our communities, grow our brands, and create jobs. That's something worth fighting for.

Congress: Listen to small business owners. Don't take away the very tools that help us thrive.

Carla Sophia Layton is founder of Hello Socialite in Charlotte.

## Essence Festival, New Orleans a great fit

The 2025 Essence Festival is over.

Revelers, partygoers and tourists have all returned home.

They made life-long memories in The Big Easy.

The streets were packed, the restaurants were full, and the shops were crowded. The economy in New Orleans was the beneficiary.

Prior to the event, the city pulled out the red carpet for the expected visitors. The media gave it the much-needed hype and acclaim that The Essence Festival so richly deserved.

Having fireworks on the Mississippi River on July 4 only added to the allure and the appeal of Essence. Those in attendance were treated to a spectacular light show. New Orleans was waiting to exhale as Day 1 started. The celebration made the days turn into nights and now all the performers and visitors are out of sight.

Those that attended the festival have had a minute to reflect upon their ex-

perience in New Orleans. I suspect there were more smiles than frowns. There are probably a lot of people who made friends here and are now on social media.

Were there folks who didn't think they got their money's worth? I suspect there was a percentage of people who felt that way.

The positive feedback outweighed the negative comments made about this event that has now become international in scope.

Can the Essence Festival get better? The answer is yes. Isn't that the goal for every major event held in any city, large or small?

Take for example, New Year's festivities in Times Square in New York. I am sure they are looking at this year's event and trying to enhance next year's. The same could be said about the St. Patrick's Day parade in Chicago. Officials are looking at the low points and trying to make improvements for the 2026 parade.

It is no different than what the Essence leaders are doing now. That's a part of the recap and the evaluation.

They are taking under advisement the comments made by those

who attended The Essence Festival.

Those in charge have already cited concerns about overall attendance. This could be due to the current economic climate in this country. Starting and ending times of performances were also mentioned in written posts. The number of performers each evening may have to decrease.

Having more "name" acts may have to be considered. We'll see.

Sponsorships will be reviewed to determine whether they can contribute more resources to the event. It does take money to make money is a time-honored expression.

The overarching question at the stage door is what tweaks and adjustments can be made for next year? Will there be additional stakeholders at the planning table?

The Saturday event at the Morial Convention Center has always been a big draw for people. The young and the seasoned all come out to purchase goods and services along with attending workshops.

There were some big names there this year. Among those was the cast

of "Beyond The Gates," the CBS daytime soap opera.

There are three things for certain; we'll all pass away, we'll continue to pay taxes, and The Essence Festival will be in the city of New Orleans for years to come.

Louisiana is fortunate to have the Essence Festival in New Orleans. It pumps millions of dollars into the local and state economy. The Bayou State is certainly better off because it has a city that can host this yearly event.

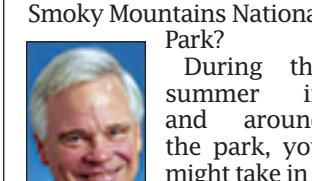
We drove through the streets of downtown New Orleans, and the traffic was bumper to bumper. People came here by automobile, plane and train. Make no mistake, the city of New Orleans and The Essence Festival are inextricably bound.

There were some hiccups this year however it wasn't indigestion. People still had a wonderful time. We will see you here next year to celebrate the joy and happiness of the Essence Festival.

Johnson C. Smith University graduate James Ewers, a Winston-Salem native, lives in New Orleans.

## The Great Smokies and eminent domain

What would be on your to-do list on a trip to Great Smoky Mountains National Park?



D.G.  
MARTIN

During the summer in and around the park, you might take in a dramatic sunset, hike to a waterfall, cool off in a river in a kayak, or catch a trout in a pristine stream.

Taking deep dives into lessons about eminent domain might not make your top five things to do, but it is what captivated my fisherman grandson as he explored not only spectacular trout holes, but also old cemeteries and foundations of homes along creeks in the Smokies near Bryson City.

Some trails he explored in Swain County hide the overgrown remnants of the large estate of wealthy landowner Phillip Rust and his wife Eleanor Dupont, an heiress to the Dupont fortune. In the 1930s, they built a summer estate along Noland Creek, including cottages for

friends and a fine home for the caretakers of the land, the Hyatt family. The homes of the Rust and Hyatt families, along with many other farms and homes, were condemned by the United States government during World War II.

The Tennessee Valley Authority constructed Fontana Dam to provide hydroelectric power for the war effort, resulting in the creation of Fontana Lake. When the lake was created, homes, churches, schools, and communities were destroyed. All in all, 1,300 people were displaced.

This example of eminent domain reminded me of "Cataloochee," by Wayne Caldwell. This novel, published in 2007, takes place prior to the construction of Fontana Dam further north in the park in the areas around Big and Little Cataloochee Creeks in Haywood County. "Cataloochee" vividly describes the impacts of eminent domain on communities, following the lives of several mountain families during the time of the Civil War until

they were pushed out of their homes in the late 1920s when their lands were acquired for the new national park.

The story follows Ezra Banks who, after serving in the Confederate army, becomes an ambitious and successful farmer, marries into a family with landholdings in Cataloochee, and starts his own family.

Charles Frazier, author of "Cold Mountain" and "Thirteen Moons," both also set in the North Carolina mountains, commented that the "rich cast of characters [in "Cataloochee"] spans generations, and collectively their stories form a brilliant portrait of a community and a way of life long gone, a lost America."

"Cataloochee" helps us conjure what happened to many families throughout the creation of the park and what it must have been like for similarly impacted families during the construction of Fontana Dam. Nobody would argue that Great Smoky Mountains National Park is not one of North Carolina's (and Tennessee's) greatest

treasures.

While perhaps more debatable, the construction of Fontana Dam was deemed necessary during the war. Through the use of eminent domain, thousands of acres of wilderness were preserved and protected. And the dam was built and the lake formed, supporting our wartime efforts.

These "good" results are not the entire story. In "Cataloochee," Wayne Caldwell reminds us of the pain and loss that were felt by families who lived in these areas for generations when they were forced to move to make room for the government's priorities.

Unfortunately, progress for the majority is often accompanied by the sacrifice of others. When we remember the blessings of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the necessity of the construction of Fontana Dam, and similar projects, we should also say a word of thanks for the sacrifices that made them possible.

Davidson College graduate D.G. Martin is a retired UNC system vice president.

## Residents, businesses respond to Chantal's damage across central North Carolina

By Alex Bass

THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

DURHAM — Durham Mayor Leo Williams saw and heard just what he needed to in the Rippling Stream Road area of the Old Farm neighborhood after Tropical Storm Chantal. "That just gave me so much hope to see people smiling in a crisis situ-

ation," Williams said, recalling words he heard from residents. "We're all right. We're going to be alright."

Chantal induced parts of the Eno River to surpass a level last seen during Hurricane Fran in 1996. "This time, it got out of its banks," said David Swain, Durham's deputy fire chief of emergency operations.

"It was moving pretty fast, like the rapids of a river."

Williams noted the active presence of the Durham Fire Department and the American Red Cross, and asked what he could do. "Can you ask everyone to call 1-800-RED CROSS (733-2767)" Williams was told. An integrated network of municipal, civic and church groups activated

collaborative activities. Emmanuel AME Church opened as a Red Cross shelter.

"We're helping people with their emergency supplies, giving them a place to sleep and helping them figure out next steps," said Kelly Flynn, the Red Cross' regional director of communications. "We will continue to keep it

open as the community needs it."

Durham Public Schools athletics director David Hackney said he has not been notified of any athletics facilities issues.

Beyond Durham, six other counties, Flynn said - Alamance, Chatham, Lee, Moore, Orange and Person - have homes that were evacuated. More than 60

# Sports

THURSDAY, JULY 24, 2025



DONALD WATKINS | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Bryce Young's rebound from an early-season benching in 2024 gives Carolina Panthers coach Dave Canales momentum in developing Young in his third NFL season.

## Is Bryce Young a franchise QB?

*Even after improved play to close 2024, the Panthers will need more to contend for a playoff berth*

By Jeff Hawkins

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

While helping coach young receivers during mandatory minicamp in June, Carolina Panthers quarterback Bryce Young instructed them on how to flip their hips on a route.

Moments later, following a 7-on-7 series, Young tracked down Xavier Legette from across the field for a quick chat. Young pointed to the practice field's video board to emphasize a message on better shoulder placement.

Coach Dave Canales said Young's presence has been felt more this off-season, but when training camp opens

on Monday, Young remains an enigma. Is he a franchise-level quarterback, or will Young revert to his bewildering early-career form, which led to his Week 2 benching last season?

In their second year together, Canales remains confident that Young's growth will be spurred by operating a familiar offensive system.

"He's showing such great mastery of what we're doing that he's allowing us to really push the envelope and do more things," Canales said. "I think the pace of our offensive development (and) evolution is growing at the pace of Bryce."

Panthers expect Young to take next step

Over the final three regular-season outings last season, Young accounted for 10 touchdowns and zero interceptions. Despite starting 1-7, the Panthers rebounded to finish 5-12. Seven of their final nine games were decided by seven points or fewer, and four went into overtime.

Canales said he expects Young, a normally reserved personality, to continue commanding the run-first offensive philosophy. The second-year coach witnessed the offseason effort Young delivered. He anticipates a stronger start to '25.

"We want to become Bryce Young's offense, become this collective thing and get the chemistry going," Canales said.

Young finished last season with 2,403 passing yards, 15 touchdowns and nine interceptions. He also scored five rushing TDs. But through his first two starts in 2024, Young completed just 55.4% of his passes, primarily short tosses, and posted zero scoring passes and three interceptions as the Panthers were outscored 73-13. Backup Andy Dalton took over, but Young stayed engaged, maturing through ad-

Please see YOUNG | 6A



**My mom is like my best friend, so eventually I kind of just wanted to end up where she started it.**



Charlotte 49ers freshman guard **McKENZIE GRAVES** on her mother Nikki, who also played there

### McKenzie Graves adds to her family's legacy with 49ers

By Cameron Williams

cameron.williams@thecharlottepost.com

McKenzie Graves wants to leave her unique stamp on Charlotte women's basketball.

Graves, a freshman guard, has a deep family history on campus. Her mom, Nikki, was one of the best players to come through the 49ers' program. She scored 1,183 points and finished top 10 all-time in steals. After college, she had tryouts for the WNBA's Charlotte Sting and Detroit Shock. However, due to a WNBA lockout, Nikki decided to pursue a career in youth development.

While McKenzie isn't old enough to remember her mom's playing days, their tight relationship landed her on Charlotte's campus.

"Family is such a big thing for me," McKenzie Graves said. "Hearing all the stories about my mom growing up, it was always 'Oh, yeah, your mom could do this,' and 'I saw your mom do that,' but I've never seen the film on her. It's good to hear the stories. She pushed me to work hard. My mom is like my

Please see GRAVES | 6A



CHARLOTTE ATHLETICS

Charlotte 49ers freshman McKenzie Graves, right, will follow her mother Nikki as basketball players in the women's program. McKenzie's brother Nik played on the men's team from 2022-25.

### CIAA media day was like old times

Fayetteville State coach Richard Hayes and his players were about to take the podium at CIAA Media Day. Their archrival Winston-Salem State had just finished its interview segment.

The TV monitors, however, were still showing the Rams logo as the Broncos were about to embark. Hayes quickly pulled his players back and told them to wait until the logos had been changed.

"We're not the Rams, we're Broncos," he said.

That's why they're called rivals, and none are as fierce as Fayetteville State vs. Winston-Salem State. With the CIAA down a rivalry matchup between St. Augustine's and Shaw after the Falcons were dropped from its membership, the league needs to keep the remaining ones percolating.

CIAA football is back where it should be - in Durham. It felt like old times, except for my good friend Eric Moore of Onidan.com, who passed in 2022. The league is looking to keep the momentum going from a 2024 season that moved football up a notch on the respect-o-meter. Six teams finished with a winning record and seven were either ranked or had players ranked in the top 20 in NCAA statistics.

Two-time defending champ Virginia Union was picked to finish first after a historic season that saw the Panthers advance to the Elite Eight. Shockingly, VUU hasn't received a No. 1 preseason ranking in over 25 years.

"I don't know what this No. 1 thing is all about," said coach Alvin Parker who led the Panthers to two straight playoff



BONITA

BEST

### MLS All-Star game is Charlotte's latest soccer showcase coup



CHARLOTTE FC

Major League Soccer Commissioner Don Garber (third from right) and Tepper Sports & Entertainment chairman David Tepper (third from left) announced Charlotte as host of the 2026 MLS All-Star Game at Bank of America Stadium.

By Cameron Williams

cameron.williams@thecharlottepost.com

Charlotte is a soccer city and Major League Soccer recognizes it.

The 2026 MLS All-Star game will be held at Bank of America Stadium, continuing a streak of marquee soccer events that has bolstered the city's reputation as a sustainable market.

"It's hard to believe we were standing in this room ... six years ago to welcome your city into our league, and I remember on that day speaking about ambition and speaking about our community," MLS Commissioner Don Garber said last week. "And those are two qualities that I believe define Charlotte FC's journey into the league. I think now those values are even more evident than ever before."

Garber acknowledged the passion of Charlotte FC's fanbase and how it promises to translate next year's showcase.

"From the first game, Charlotte FC fans have come to represent the spirit of the Queen City," he said. "Your fans and the community are a symbol of unity for soccer fans across our country and over the past nearly four years, Charlotte

Please see MLS | 6A

Please see CIAA | 6A

## Young still an enigma as training camp starts

Continued from page 5A

versity.

How much, though?

That's certainly one of the Panthers' biggest questions entering camp.

Young will start providing some conclusions on the practice fields behind Bank of America Stadium. With a new facility under construction, fans cannot attend workouts. The Panthers host the Cleveland Browns in their exhibition opener Aug. 8.

Produce in 2025 to earn a contract extension

Can Young lead Carolina to its first playoff appearance since 2017?

If he does, it could begin answering the questions surrounding the fifth year of Young's rookie contract. Will the 2023 No. 1 overall draft pick earn an extension befitting a franchise quarterback?

The Panthers, who play three of their first four regular season games on the road, need a strong start to keep fans' interest piqued. If Young struggles early, however, the silence over any potential deal could become deafening. The 2026 NFL Draft is likely to feature top quarterback prospects like Texas'

Arch Manning, LSU's Garrett Nussmeier, Clemson's Cade Klubnik and South Carolina's LaNorris Sellers.

Canales' focus remains on Young's growth. Young anticipates building on his early-career experiences, good and bad.

"It's definitely something that I'm grateful for," he said. "As (I) felt more and more comfortable throughout last year and then now going into year two in the system ... we continue to build our relationship and grow within the entire offensive staff."

"It's been great just being able to start at a higher level now (and) focus on growth rather than learning."

Throughout the offseason program, Young looked sharp at times. Like his 11-on-11 play during mandatory minicamp on June 11 when Young toyed with the first-time defense. He twice tossed TD passes to Legette and capped the effort with a pinpoint 2-point conversion to a well-covered David Moore.

The next day, Young threw an ill-advised interception to cornerback Mike Jackson.

## Graves adds to 49ers legacy

Continued from page 5A

best friend, so eventually, I kind of just wanted to end up where she started it."

Graves' older brother Nik played for the Charlotte men's basketball team from 2022-25 before transferring to Creighton for his senior season. While McKenzie said she knew that Nik planned on transferring before she committed, Nik still spoke fondly of his time at Charlotte, and helped sell her on it.

"[Nik] was always just encouraging me," McKenzie said. "He talked about how much he loved it here, and honestly, I knew my brother wasn't gonna stay by the time I made my decision, so he didn't really have an influence on if I was going to commit or not, but this was just somewhere I kind of always wanted to be. Hearing how good his experience was here, it kind of just sold me a little bit more."

McKenzie played her final season of high school basketball at NC Good Better Best Academy, a highly competitive player development program compared to the traditional high school basketball experience. She appeared in 16 games as a senior, averaging just under 10 points per game. One game in particular impressed Charlotte coach Tomekia Reed.

"As we watched McKenzie play in high school, she was playing with some of the better players," Reed said, "she was playing with great athletes, with a great coach, coaching staff, and we saw them play a top team here in Charlotte."

"One thing that I noticed about McKenzie, she never backed down. She was a presence on the floor. She was a leader on the floor. Her work ethics were different. And moving forward into this new season, we knew that we needed players like that, not only players that were good, hard workers on the floor, but players who bought into who Charlotte is."

McKenzie said she has always thrived on being coached hard. Reed can be a fiery and intense coach, and McKenzie said this is something she loves about Reed as a coach.

"I've just always been a player that really likes tough coaching," McKenzie said. "When I first met coach [Reed], she was a tough coach, and I really liked that. The energy on the sideline, I've always liked a coach that's like going up and down the court. Her energy, her passion for the game, her enthusiasm on the court, is just something I really loved."

Reed normally likes to put veteran leaders on the floor. While McKenzie is a freshman, Reed feels there is room for her to have a voice.

"When you watch McKenzie play, you don't even know she's a freshman," Reed said. "And that's what I like. I like that maturity that she's showing. I like the confidence that she has, and so she'll be able to have a really good role with this program. Obviously, we want to get her feet wet. We want her to get an opportunity so that she can lead the next team to come in as a freshman. She'll have a voice, a voice to encourage, a voice to inspire, a voice to help instill that locker room pride in these players when a coaching staff is not around."

McKenzie hopes to make an impact any way possible. She knows people may think she has big shoes to fill with her family history of 49ers but she's interested in her own legacy.

"I just want to leave my mark," she said. "Leave a mark with high energy, a good attitude. Of course, the family legacy is something I would love to leave, but my parents and my brother left their legacy here."

"It's time for me to leave my legacy."

## CIAA media day like old times

Continued from page 5A

road wins before losing at Valdosta State. "We had 17 starters returning last year, and we didn't get picked No. 1. We lost 17 guys in the portal this year and got picked No. 1."

The Panthers' top ranking was nothing compared to Johnson C. Smith being voted No. 2. It's the highest preseason ranking in program history. It also means prognosticators think Virginia Union and JCSU will meet in the CIAA Championship Game.

After a record-setting 8-0 start, the Golden Bulls needed one win in their last two games to advance to the championship. Instead, they lost to rivals FSU and Livingstone. But the future is bright.

"Our goal was to build a culture that can compete for championships," coach Maurice Flowers said. "...We've been known to be a 'stat' game. You want to get up for a team you know you can beat. ...Now, folks say, 'we have to bring our A-game.'"

Adrian Jones is no longer a Bear, but it

still was strange seeing him in Elizabeth City blue after nine years in maroon and white. Jones touted the athletic and community support he's received since being named head coach in December.

"We are going to play an exciting brand of football and be a disciplined team," he said. "We are going to be nasty on defense."

Bluefield State coach Davon Morgan got the nasty treatment last season after kicking off coaches at media day.

Not only did Morgan, who was a rookie, talk some trash at the podium, but he rubbed the championship trophy as if to say it was already theirs. Final record: 1-9.

This time was a different story. No rubbing. And his parting shot: "We love everybody. We wish everybody success. We hope everybody comes out injury free."

Lesson learned.

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

Adrian Jones is no longer a Bear, but it

## MLS All-Star showcase latest soccer coup for city

Continued from page 5A

has not only become a great host for Major League Soccer games, it's become a world class soccer destination, and that's what we were talking about. We were talking about bringing MLS to the city, hosting great Copa America games, hosting the Club World Cup, and having an incredible match just a couple of weeks ago, Charlotte is firmly on the global soccer map."

David Tepper, owner and chairman of Tepper Sports & Entertainment, emphasized the reality of Charlotte as a soccer city and what hosting an all-star game would do for his team and the city.

"This is a soccer city. Let's make no mistake about that," he said. "Hosting an all-star game with any league is a big deal. And to have a week-long celebration leading up to the MLS All-Star game will be a great thing for our club and our city, Charlotte, because the eyes of the world, as commissioner said, will be particularly on soccer after the World Cup comes to the United States of America. So, it's a great sort of launching pad for us here in Charlotte."

Tepper added that a goal of his foundation is to support the community. The showcase itself is exciting, but so is what it can do for local exposure.

"All-Star week is an exciting week. It's exciting when it comes here, an exciting week for what happens in the community and the week-long event," he said. "Since we've had this team, we've fostered ... 20 million minutes of grassroots soccer programming in this city. That's a lot of minutes of soccer programming. And, we have 14 mini pitches in greater Charlotte... We're just so excited to have the game here, and we're really excited for what that brings, Charlotte, and it will be exciting for soccer in general."

In recent years Charlotte has hosted sporting events from the FIFA Club World Cup and ACC championships to the Savannah Bananas that attract people from around the world. As a result, the city is becoming a premier destination for sports fans everywhere.

"We're very excited to host yet another milestone sporting event," Mayor Vi Lyles said. "In the past several years, we've become internationally known as a sports and entertainment destination, and so it's fitting that Charlotte welcomes now the most popular sport in the world. ... I want you to know that we understand diversity reflects Charlotte and soccer really reflects diversity."



LOGAN RILEY | NBAE

Head coach Chris Jent of the Charlotte Hornets hands the trophy to the team after the game against the Sacramento Kings during the 2025 NBA Summer League Championship game on July 20 at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas, Nevada.

## First for Hornets: summer title

By Cameron Williams

cameron.williams@thecharlottepost.com

The Hornets finally won their first championship.

Charlotte beat Sacramento 83-78 in Sunday's NBA Summer League final in Las Vegas. While it may be Summer League, it is something the organization can rally behind ahead of the regular season.

"This group brought a lot of enjoyment to everybody every day," said Hornets' assistant coach Chris Jent, who coached the summer team. "Their hard work, perseverance and togetherness showed what it took to encompass a team. I think they just played together and competed their tails off. We were way undersized for the game, but we kept scrapping, making the right plays and a little attention to detail there at the end."

Charlotte's 2024 second round pick K.J. Simpson had 11 points, five assists and seven rebounds in the final. Afterwards, wearing his championship ring, Simpson was delighted.

"I am just excited," he said. "This was a team win. It was just a great group of guys. We got here a little earlier than the rest of the teams, so we were going at it and going at it. We just couldn't wait to play against someone else, so I am just happy we got the win."

Simpson proved to be serviceable last season in a backup role, averaging 7.8 points per game with a high of 18 points against Chicago on April 6. Simpson hopes what he did this summer was enough to prove himself.

"For me, I just tried to come out here and prove my value," Simpson said. "[I hoped] I proved I got drafted for a reason. Even though this is my second Summer League, I didn't get to play last season because I was hurt. I see what people say about me, but I just use it as fuel and motivation."

Kon Knueppel, Charlotte's top pick in 2025, scored 21 points against Sacramento to earn the Summer League MVP award.

"I think coach Jent really instilled the ideas of competitiveness, competing all the time and then being together," he said. "So, that is what we did, every game we played together. And, it had a good outcome for us."

Knueppel also believes several players on the summer roster will make the 2025-26 roster as well.

"You always play to win," he said. "I think building winning habits, even if it is Summer League, is very beneficial."

Knueppel got off to a rough start in his first Summer League game, going 1-for-8 from the floor. He bounced back with several double figure scoring outings and his best for last.

"It was a rough start for sure," he said. "I didn't play well, but I think it's the NBA now, you have so many games, just the next game [mentality] is important."

Hornets' head coach Charles Lee was in attendance for the final, and Knueppel said he felt he was looking for indications of basketball intelligence.

"It's not necessarily about statistics or anything," Knueppel said. "It is about making the right basketball play on both sides of the floor, being in good positioning. Those are the things that are important."

Now the focus shifts to the regular season. The Hornets, who haven't made the playoffs since 2016, are looking to parlay a summer of promise into brighter days ahead.

"I'm just excited to be a part of this team," Knueppel said. "You know, I just got here. I can't wait to get to training camp and minicamp is here in August. It will be fun to get with the [veteran] guys and I just can't wait."

**The Charlotte Post**

