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# The Charlotte Post

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AARON DOUCETT | UNSPLASH

Federal budget cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, coupled with economic uncertainty has increased the burden of food pantries to keep pace with increased demand.

## US budget cuts leave food pantries short on options

Federal rollbacks and economic uncertainty force nonprofits to keep pace

By Cameron Williams

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Federal budget rollbacks are straining local food pantries.

The Trump administration moved to end Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits entirely; however, partial payments are still being issued after a federal judge intervened. However, it will leave millions of Americans struggling to put food on the table. Heading into the holiday season — typically a busy time for food pantries — it will pose more challenges.

Kenya Joseph, founder of Hearts and

Hands Food Pantry, said they are already working hard going into the holidays, but this has added more than double the work.

"We're at this place where we're adding on additional days, additional hours," she said. "As we open our calendar, as quickly as we open up a new slot, we have staff coverage, volunteer coverage for that slot is being taken immediately.

This is an apocalyptic situation in a way,

honestly, and it's crazy to me because

it's completely man made. This is not a situation where a pandemic is happening, or a major hurricane or storm has wiped out parts of our state or things like that. These are our government leaders who people automatically kind of take for granted that they're going to do what needs to be done."

Nearly 12% of Mecklenburg County's households — more than 45,000 people — are considered food insecure, according to Feeding America. The food insecurity rate for Mecklenburg children is 18%. According to county data, there are about

Please see BUDGET | 2A



Joseph

## Who's Who gala celebrates a decade of inspiration

By Ken Koontz

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

"Far beyond wildest dreams!"

"Phenomenal!"

"Overwhelming!"

Those are a sample of comments from the record-setting attendance of almost 500 people at the 10th anniversary Who's Who In Black Charlotte gala. The Nov. 7

celebration is one of numerous galas under the umbrella of Real Image Media.

While thanking sponsors, advertisers and underwriters, gala producer Rhonda Caldwell said the goal is to encourage participants and honorees to share their stories, life experiences, challenges and successes with inspirational messages to aspiring youth.

"You can be what you see," she said. "And those of you in this room through your successes and examples can be the example that leads black youth to their success just as you represent here tonight."

Caldwell acknowledged the Charlotte gala culminates a decade of "defining who we are and where we're going."

Please see A CELEBRATION | 2A

## Longtime JCSU public address voice signing off after 40 years



HERBERT L. WHITE | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Otis Stroud, who has been the public address voice of Johnson C. Smith University athletics over 40 years, is retiring at the end of the Golden Bulls basketball season. He signed off for the final time as a football announcer Nov. 8 with the Commemorative Classic between JCSU and Livingstone College.

By Herbert L. White

herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Otis Stroud is closing on his final mic drop. Stroud is hanging up his microphone at Johnson C. Smith University's football and basketball public address announcer after 40 years, bringing a close as one of the most distinct voices in CIAA sports. His first assignment was a 1986 Golden Bulls football game against Winston-Salem State University at Memorial Stadium, a 15-6 Rams win.

Stroud's McGirt Field finale was the Nov. 8 Commemorative Classic between JCSU and Livingstone College, a 26-21 Golden Bulls win. He'll work men's and women's basketball, then settle into retirement.

"Right now, I have mixed emotions, because I've done it for so long, and I know that it's time to move on for me personally," he said before the football finale. "and by being a rivalry, I certainly feel grateful to be able to call the game because it has some impact in terms of the championship. The Golden Bulls win, they're in; if they lose, we're sad again."

JCSU's win clinched a berth in the CIAA title game, the latest accomplishment for a pro

Please see LONGTIME | 2A

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## Budget cuts leave food pantries short on options

Continued from page 1A

138,500 SNAP participants in Mecklenburg and federal funding amounts to about \$24 million per month, or about \$175 per recipient per month.

Food insecurity can result in reduced quality and variety of diet, eating less and disrupted eating patterns because of a lack of money and resources. There are also health implications to limited access to healthy food. It can lead to poor diet, which can result to obesity, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

The situation won't be easily mitigated until benefits are reinstated, but with the government amid its longest shutdown in history, it's unlikely.

Without funding, more people will have to rely on pantries and other means of assistance to get through the holidays unless the government acts, which adds to the stress level of pantry workers.

"I haven't rested at all for the last two weeks," Joseph said. "Not a day off, nothing. So, I am coming down with [illness]. It is hugely stressful. Obviously, it's great that we are a food pantry and we are on the front lines. That is our job to provide for the community but the work behind the scenes needed to be done is going to be tough to make sure that we have enough to give the families consistently without gaps."

As long as SNAP is limited, pantries will try to stand in the gap, but eventually food will run out unless aid returns.

"With SNAP being stopped, that is a huge situation that we've never seen before, or at least I've never seen before in my lifetime," Joseph said. "However, for the organizations, this has been our paradigm since the beginning of February because the USDA cut all these programs that were helping supply food pantries and food banks. They've been making cuts all year, so we've been struggling all year to help meet the demand we are seeing. But our community is responding and helping out by donating."

Joseph doesn't know how long supplies will last, but understands depletion is inevitable without help. She implores people to keep donating and volunteering until the government reopens and reinstate full benefits.

"There is absolutely going to be a tipping point, and the question is, where is that tipping point," she said. "That's a very individual question to the capacity of each organization. I can't even necessarily answer that for ours right now. We don't know when we're going to reach that point or where it is. It just depends."

*On the Net:*  
[heartsandhandsfoodpantry.com](http://heartsandhandsfoodpantry.com)



JESSICA MORENO

Residents of Forest Park Mobile Home Park in Charlotte are on the verge of displacement after developer Wood Partners announced their intention to rezone the property for an apartment community. Many of the residents own their homes but don't have the means to relocate to a new park.

## Renters stung by mobile home park landlord's order

Continued from page 1A

Developer Wood Partners, which builds apartment housing across the U.S., bought the property as part of a larger 19.5-acre tract along Prosperity Church Road. The developers explained their intentions in the rezoning application they submitted to the city of Charlotte in 2024. Their plan is building "up to 395 residential units and up to 25,000 square feet of nonresidential use."

"I am deeply connected to this work because of...dealing with the exact same thing, displacement, gentrification, and the feeling of betrayal from [Mecklenburg County]," Moreno said. "The loss of our homes and community caused a lot of trauma even to this day."

Moreno was displaced along with her family and neighbors from their mobile park home in Matthews in 2017.

Moreno says the situation she previously faced and Forest Park is a recurring one.

"This issue...predominantly affects my community," she said. "It became very clear to me, it was a trend," adding that other area mobile home communities are in "grave danger" of displacement as well.

"When will our city stop displacing people of color in the name of progress?" Moreno asked during a recent press conference staged by Action NC and Forest Park residents demanding greater relocation assistance.

"In a rapidly growing city like Charlotte, we understand that there is a need to build housing," says Moreno. "However, the housing that is being built is market rate, if we are not careful, soon all the people of color, essential workers, working class people, will be pushed out. Once again, we build on the backs of poor people."

Charlotte City Council member Renee Johnson, whose district includes Forest Park, has a more balanced perspective on the issue.

"I am always advocating for affordable housing," said Johnson, who says she represents the implication that council is quick to accommodate big money developers over the citizens they represent. "People are being priced out of Charlotte."

While Johnson acknowledges the shortage of affordable housing options, she points out that the city has made continued efforts to protect, promote and preserve affordable housing.

"[Charlotte] is doing something about it," she said. "It's just not enough."

One of the city's offerings has been the Housing Trust Fund which was established in 2002 to provide gap financing to developers to help cover the cost of building, maintaining and restoring affordable housing developments.

According to the city's website, since its conception the HTF has provided over \$231 million toward some 11,000 affordable housing units.

But in any expanding city, keeping up with affordable housing is always a challenge.

"This is not just a Charlotte problem," says Johnson.

According to a 2023 article published by the Pew Research Center, almost 50% of people who rent are "cost burdened," or paying more than they can realistically afford each month.

Broader economic issues such as overall inflation and employment challenges contribute as well.

Johnson emphasizes the gravity of this situation is not lost on her or other city leaders.

"When I first heard about [Forest Park closing] I was heartbroken," she said. "I drove out there and passed my card out. I wanted to make sure that these residents were aware of their options."

Johnson relates that while she was walking around Forest Park, she realized that the majority of residents were Spanish speaking only. This did not impede her intentions.

"I organized a virtual meeting and made sure there would be interpreters present," she says.

City records show that on Nov. 20, 2024, all residents of adjacent properties of the Prosperity Road tract were mailed notices about a virtual community meeting scheduled for Dec. 4, 2024.

Additionally, the letter provided an email address for residents to use in order to submit questions and concerns

if they were unable to attend the virtual meeting itself.

Johnson also says that she has continuously spoken with developers throughout the process in regards to Forest Park residents and any assistance that might be provided.

According to current North Carolina regulations, if a mobile home park is going to be closed, the owners are required to issue written notice to all residents at least 180 days before closing, or roughly six months. Forest Park residents were given four times that.

That isn't the only consolation extended that many consider generous.

North Carolina does not require mobile park owners to offer financial relocation assistance, even when residents own the trailer.

Still, Wood Partners has offered \$5,500 payment to each household within the park. An additional payment of up to \$10,000 has been offered by Valleo Residential, a property company that owns dozens of mobile home parks in the region to relocate to one of its other properties.

Forest Park residents, however, are not impressed. During the October press conference, they issued a joint statement which said in part, "What they're offering us is not enough to relocate or rebuild our lives. \$5,500 is too little, and even the \$10,000 they offer if we move to a Vallée community is not a real solution. Those communities are far away and would destabilize our families' lives and finances."

Valleo has vacancies at some Charlotte properties, but the ones offered in the Forest Park relocation packet are primarily in York and Lancaster, South Carolina, and King's Mountain, some 35 miles west.

"What is being offered is nowhere near enough to replace what we are losing. We have already paid off our homes. \$5,500 or even \$10,000 won't cover the cost of buying another home, moving, inspections, permits, and paying double rent," the residents' statement declared. "We would be forced into debt or homelessness."

The statement also stressed that the loss was not only material, pointing out that relocating at a great distance would upend employment, schooling and religious worship.

Residents concluded the statement by saying that nothing less than \$150,000 per resident would adequately suffice for them to uproot their lives and relocate "without losing everything."

According to Moreno, similar gestures of resistance have yielded results in some other area mobile home parks and apartment buildings.

She cites several cases in which issues such as predatory leases and substandard living conditions were brought forward by residents and successfully addressed by property owners.

Moreno also says that in cases involving displacement, monetary relocation assistance has been negotiated, including her own former home where each household received \$8,000 from developers.

Demanding \$150,000 however, is unlikely to elicit any action, particularly from developers who have already offered \$5,500 to each resident.

But compensation isn't the only happy ending residents would accept.

"Residents hope to stay in place," Moreno said. "That is the best outcome for the community. I'd like to challenge that if the rezoning gets tossed, that we should as a community figure out a way to support this property to become a resident owned community."

However, Wood Partners has made it clear that even if the rezoning application is denied, they will move forward with the park's closing.

And with little incentive, it is unlikely Wood Partners will change their mind, which is something Johnson wants to make sure all Charlotteans are clear on.

"This is a sad situation," she said, "[but] it is not up to the city. The developer is going to sell the property regardless."

"This is not fair compensation. It is displacement. We deserve real solutions," the residents' statement concluded.

Although there is little legal recourse, Moreno says she and residents remain optimistic.

"When people organize, they win," she said.



Who's Who in Black Charlotte Living Legends 2025 honorees (from left) Tommie Robinson (visual artist); Robinson's son Winston; Gracie Pendergrass-Coleman, Atrium Health board; Linda Lockman-Brooks (marketing services); J'Tanya Adams (business/economic/community development) and Who's Who producer Rhonda Caldwell.

## A celebration of achievement

Continued from page 1A

"It's been a decade of designing a future and documenting our history," she said.

The highlight was recognition of five "Living Legends" who paved the way and 10 "Game Changers."

"You gotta be bold because that's who you are," said Hiram Jackson, publisher and CEO of Real Time Media. "We're celebrating excellence, all 750 people attending the event and the 440 individual honorees."

Bank of America Charlotte President

Keith Cockrell, a sponsor of the event, noted that his company has more than 350 Black senior executives across its nationwide presence. Like Caldwell, he urged the audience to share the Who's Who album with a student.

Malcolm Coley, retired managing director of global accounting firm EY, established the nonprofit Bright Hope Capitol to boost developing Black businesses. He noted the gala was more than a "reflection of the past, but of what's to come."

Bank of America Charlotte President

## Longtime JCSU announcer Stroud hangs up microphone

Continued from page 1A

His most memorable call was a 14-6 homecoming win against WSSU in 1996, the Golden Bulls' last against the Rams until 2023. JCSU has now won three straight in the series.

"That was at that time a great rivalry at Memorial Stadium," Stroud recalled. "We had fans on both sides of the field cheering for their respective teams, and we prevailed. For me, that was a great game. It was one of those classics where the defense pretty much dominated the game, but we walked away with the victory."

Public address requires preparation beyond turning on a microphone. Stroud said the job requires attention to details and an ability to speak clearly and accurately. Mostly, it requires a standard of professionalism. "Sometimes you have to

be neutral, even though you bleed the blue and gold, but...call the game fair so that it won't be a biased situation," he said. "Just do your best. You have to do your homework, make sure that you get pronunciation of the kids correct, because if not, the parents will be yelling at you. It's not as easy as it seems."

Stroud's turning the microphone over, but he doesn't plan on disappearing. He'll continue to follow the Golden Bulls and perhaps lend his baritone if asked.

"I'm going to announce all of the basketball games this year, and hopefully we'll drop the mic on that as well," he said. "But I told them, if they ever need me in an emergency situation and if I'm available, I certainly would be glad to do it."

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## Losing Speed: Predominantly Black town on the verge of losing state charter

By Lucas Thomae

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

SPEED - Despite its name, life moves slowly in the Town of Speed.

So does its municipal

government, which has been pressured by the state's Local Government Commission to dissolve voluntarily after falling way behind on mandatory

financial reports. Speed, a 0.3-square-mile parcel of land just off the highway in rural eastern Edgecombe County, is surrounded on all sides by

cotton fields. In autumn, when the crop is ready to be harvested, fluffy cotton covers the farmland like snow.

About 60 people live

within the limits of Speed, many of whom have been there for most of their lives. It's an older community — the median age of residents is 67.

That wasn't always the case. First founded as a railroad stop town in 1901, the town's population peaked above 140 in the Please see **PREDOMINANTLY** | 5A



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## US rule would override medical debt protections

By Anna Claire Vollers

STATELINE

A new Trump administration rule issued late last month would override state laws that prevent consumers' credit reports from including medical debt, potentially weakening financial protections for millions of Americans.

In recent years, more than a dozen states have taken steps to keep medical debt from hurting residents' credit scores, passing laws with bipartisan support. But new guidance from the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau repeals a Biden-era rule that allowed states to impose their own bans. The Trump administration has interpreted the 1970 Fair Credit Reporting Act to say that it overrides state laws around reporting debt to credit bureaus.

American consumers had at least \$220 billion in unpaid medical bills in 2024, according to an analysis from research nonprofit KFF. About 6% of American adults, or 14 million people, owe more than \$1,000 in medical debt.

"Medical debt is a tremendous weight keeping so many families from financial security, and, unlike most other forms of debt, it's not a choice," North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein, a Democrat, said last month in a statement announcing that a new state program had wiped out more than \$6.5 billion in medical debt for more than 25 million North Carolinians.

People rarely plan to take on debt from medical care, as they do when they borrow money to buy a house or car. A one-time or short-term expense such as a single hospital stay causes about two-thirds of all medical debt, according to a 2022 Consumer Financial Protection Bureau report.

And even though most Americans have health insurance, many get stuck with unexpected medical bills because their policies have high deductibles or don't fully cover some treatments, procedures or drugs. People in worse health and those living with a disability are more likely to

report medical debt, as are middle-aged adults, Black Americans, and people with low and middle incomes, according to KFF.

In the past two years, a dozen states have passed laws forbidding medical debt from appearing on credit reports, bringing the total number of states with such laws to 14: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and Washington.

Another five states — Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Nevada and Utah — limit how and when medical debt can appear on credit reports, according to the nonprofit Commonwealth Fund.

Republican and Democratic legislators in other states, including Michigan, Ohio and South Dakota, have introduced similar bills this year.

Now the new state laws face an uncertain future. In January, while Biden was still in office, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau finalized a rule prohibiting credit reporting agencies from reporting medical debt in certain circumstances. Credit bureaus and credit unions sued to stop the rule. The incoming Trump administration agreed with the plaintiffs and declined to defend the rule in court, so a federal judge blocked it.

Maine state Sen. Donna Bailey, a Democrat, said in a September statement that Maine's new law barring medical debt from appearing on consumer reports was even more important in light of the demise of the federal rule.

"Although Americans no longer have the federal protection, Mainers will continue to have protection here in our state," she said in September. "When we go to the hospital for medical care, especially for emergencies, any debt that we take on should not hold us back from buying a car, renting a home or taking out a loan."

But the Trump administration's latest order would render state laws such as Maine's moot.

## House minority leader navigates Democrats caving to the GOP

By Lauren Burke

BLACK PRESS USA

opposing this bill in the Senate," Jeffries said. "They'll articulate that there are a variety of different reasons that the bill is being opposed in the Senate."

Eight Democrats joined with Senate Republicans on Nov. 9 to start the process to end the 41-day federal government shutdown. The problem:

The deal that the eight Democrats struck with Republicans who run the chamber did not include an extension of health care tax credits for the Affordable Care Act.

The tax credits are set to expire on Dec. 31. The Republican Party has focused on dismantling the Affordable Care Act, which they labeled Obamacare since 2010.

"Donald Trump and Republicans, this toxic administration, they fired more than 200,000 federal employees prior to the shutdown that they started," Jeffries told reporters.

Senate Democrats who sided with Republicans to start the process of reopening the government are pointing to a vote on the health care tax credits as part of the concession to reopen the government. But several of the eight Senators who were part of the deal with Republicans are being asked why they would trust the Republicans on any of the issues at hand.

The House was expected to reconvene and consider the Senate's shutdown proposal on Nov. 12. Democrats are likely to propose several amendments to the deal, which are likely to fail.

During a Nov. 10 House Democratic Caucus call, several members expressed gratitude to the House Leader Hakeem Jeffries for his management of the situation while Democrats in the House witnessed their Senate colleagues strike a deal with Republicans once again.

## US judges will consider bid to block gerrymandered district

By Lynn Bonner

NC NEWSLINE

The three-judge panel considering a legal challenge to the newly drawn congressional district in northeastern North Carolina will hold a hearing on a preliminary injunction on Nov. 19.

The state NAACP, Common Cause and a group of voters known as the Williams plaintiffs asked the federal judges to block the state from holding an election using the new district lines Republican legislators approved last month.

Republicans in the state legislature joined the national redistricting war when they reconfigured election boundaries for the 1st District to draw in more GOP voters. President Donald Trump has asked Republican-led states to redraw their congressional district maps to maximize GOP advantages in the midterm elections.

The redrawn North Carolina map is likely to take the state's congressional

delegation from 10 Republicans and four Democrats to 11 Republicans and three Democrats.

The new 1st District lines dismantle a region known as the Black Belt, where a cross-county bloc of Black voters has helped elect a Black Democrat to Congress since 1992.

Republican legislators said during debates over the district that the redraw was strictly partisan, and no racial data was used to create the new lines.

The 1st Congressional District was already included among other districts in a federal racial gerrymandering case. Oral arguments were held in that case last summer. The judges have not issued a ruling yet.

The NAACP plaintiffs told the judges that the new 1st District boundaries are even worse than the district lines used in the 2024 election. They claim the new plan retaliates against voters based on how they voted.

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# Predominantly Black town on verge of dissolution

**Continued from page 2A**  
middle decades of the 20th century and at one time had a bank, a school and a law enforcement program, none of which exist today.

In 1999, the town was ravaged by flooding caused by Hurricane Floyd and it never quite recovered. Vacant buildings remain today a reminder of the floodwaters which caused many residents to move away.

The town is easy to miss, and in some respects, hard to reach.

Speed has no full-time staff, no official website and – although the town hall does have an email and phone number – there's no obvious way of finding that contact information online.

The town's governance has seen very little change over the decades. One former commissioner, Leroy Candies, served up until the age of 96 before resigning in December. He died in March.

Wilbert Harrison, 74, has been mayor since 1996. He's used a wheelchair for the past several years since recovering from health incidents that include a stroke and tongue cancer. These days he does most of his work out of his home.

In 2023, he won what will likely be Speed's final mayoral election, uncontested, with 12 votes.

Although one might think politics can get messy in such a small town, Harrison told Carolina Public Press that such a small community is actually an advantage.

"Like a family, you talk to them," he said of his neighbors.

"Try to get to thinking (about) what they desire."

For the most part, that's simply meant maintaining trash services and streetlights. The town also has a volunteer fire department and a water tower, but neither receive funding from the town.

However, since 2022 Speed has struggled to

keep up with the financial paperwork required to remain an incorporated town. Under state law it must produce a yearly financial audit, semiannual cash and investment reports, and a balanced budget by July 1 of each year.

The town hasn't submitted a financial audit in three years, nor has it kept up with the other requirements. In 2024, Speed approved its budget more than three months late, and in doing so violated state statute by continuing to use town funds without a budget.

The LGC, the state agency tasked with financial oversight of more than 1,000 local government units across North Carolina, first suggested that Speed consider dissolving in August 2024.

Representatives of the LGC visited Speed and gave a presentation to the town commissioners about what dissolution could look like, but they reported back that the town's leadership wasn't interested in taking that route.

The relationship between Speed and the LGC grew more fraught after that visit, and the state soon said it was having difficulties contacting the town at all. An auditor hired by the town also cited issues with communication and ceased his services that year.

"Speed continues to face challenges complying with the Local Government and Fiscal Control Act," Deputy Treasurer Debbie Tomasko reported at the December LGC meeting.

"We've had just some struggles in getting information we need and getting timely responses to staff requests for information."

At that meeting, the Commission voted 4-2 to require the town to contract with an outside financial officer or else face a dissolution process initiated by the LGC. The last time the Commission took that step was with East Laurinburg in 2021.

"These steps aren't taken lightly," then-Treasurer Dale Folwell said.

Folwell was replaced by Brad Briner after the 2024 election, but that didn't ease the pressure off of Speed.

Kenneth Randolph, a town commissioner since 2015, said that the LGC told the Town Board that even if Speed got caught up with its audits and other required paperwork, it still didn't bring in enough monthly revenue to keep a balanced budget.

"Personally, I would like to keep the town," Randolph said, even if it's just for a few more years.

But the LGC didn't give the town much of a choice. Voluntary dissolution would give the town more autonomy in how the process is carried out, compared to a state-initiated one, which was becoming increasingly likely.

On Oct. 14, the Town Board passed a resolution of intent to dissolve its charter.

"It's kind of heartwrenching," Harrison said of the idea of Speed dissolving. He still holds out hope that Speed can find a way to carry on, but the chances of that happening are slim.

Town Clerk Dolores Faison didn't respond to multiple requests for a copy of that resolution of intent to dissolve.

The town faces logistical issues. The town has until June 30, 2026 to develop a plan to distribute its assets and liabilities. The commissioners must also decide what to do about its town-owned roads, streetlights and trash service.

Edgecombe County doesn't offer trash pick-up, which will be a problem for the town's elderly residents, Randolph said. One option is to form a homeowners association or other organization that

could collect dues to pay for those services, but nothing like that is in the works yet.

Charter or not, Randolph's favorite aspects of his town – the name and the quiet – will remain.

Harrison's neighbors, all of whom he knows by name,



LUCAS THOMAE | CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

Wilbert Harrison sits at his home in Speed, the town for which he has served as mayor since 1996.

could collect dues to pay for those services, but nothing like that is in the works yet.

Charter or not, Randolph's favorite aspects of his town – the name and the quiet – will remain.

After all, not much changes in Speed.

## « PEOPLE OF NOTE »

### Ferguson earns NC Award

STAFF REPORTS

**James Ferguson II** is among six honorees of the North Carolina Award.

Ferguson, who died in July, will be posthumously acknowledged for his contributions for public service Nov. 13 in Asheville. Gov. Josh Stein will present the awards, and proceeds from the event will support Hurricane Helene recovery efforts.

Ferguson, an Asheville native, was a trailblazing civil rights attorney best known for his involvement in a landmark Supreme Court ruling in 1970 that required school districts to desegregate their schools.

He co-founded North Carolina's first interracial law firm with Julius Chambers, James Lanning, and Adam Stein, Josh Stein's father.

Established by the General Assembly in 1961, the first medals for the North Carolina Award were given in 1964. In addition to Ferguson, the 2025 honorees include Buddy Melton and Woody Platt (fine arts), Wiley Cash (literature), Roy Williams (public service), and Dr. Kathie Dello (science).

Glenn Burkins and Sonya Ramsey earned the T.D. Elder Trailblazer Award given by the Charlotte Mecklenburg Black Heritage Committee.

Burkins, founder and publisher of the online news outlet QC Metro, and Ramsey, a UNC Charlotte professor and historian, will be honored at

a Nov. 15 luncheon at the Charlotte Museum of History. The luncheon honors Theresea Elder's professional and civic contributions to Mecklenburg County, local history initiatives and as founder of CMBHC.

The Trailblazer Award recognizes residents or organizations whose work have blazed trails for others to follow.

**Khadijah Mosely**, a teacher at Hornets Nest Elementary School, is a finalist in KI's Fourth Annual Classroom Furniture Giveaway.

If Mosley wins, she will receive \$50,000 in classroom furniture to transform her STEM classroom into the flexible, student-centered space she designed for the competition—supporting collaboration and student well-being.

Public voting is open through Nov. 16 at [ki.com/giveaway](http://ki.com/giveaway).

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# The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

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## American values on ICE

My friend Henry suddenly texted me out of the blue two weeks ago.

Henry is Aztec American, born in the U.S., raised in Little Village, a largely Hispanic neighborhood in Chicago.

"ICE is vicious," he told me. "They are snatching anyone they want and just abducting workers, families out of their homes, children walking to school, tamale vendors from their carts! - it's a nightmare. I carry my U.S. passport with me at all times, but that isn't any guarantee either."

Watching the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents up close and personal is becoming more and more common for those who simply want America to live up to its creed. But nowadays, with all the power of ICE defaulting to the Trump project, courteous and professional ICE agents seem to be a thing of the past. Immigrants, no matter how solidly ensconced in their communities they might be, are now targets for arrest, detention, and deportation.

What did immigrants mean to America then and now? Ask our vaunted Statue of Liberty:

"Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Gloves world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command

The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she

With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Yeah, that was then - 1883, actually the year my people came over from Scotland and were welcomed - this is now. That was the definition of what it meant to be American. Not now. It's un-American to be American.

Here in my town, Portland, Oregon, ICE is simply unwanted. The mayor and city council found violations in how the ICE facility is run, the community is offering a great deal of nonviolent opposition, and ICE agents are acting like occupying troops.

I go there as a member of the Portland Peace Team when we are invited to help keep the peace to protect nonviolent demonstrators. We've gone out several times alongside an Interfaith Vigil group, with Sun Rise, and other groups that are explicitly nonviolent. We've been out in driving rain, at night, and on warm sunny days. So far, those who invite us have remained safe, either through our efforts, their own conduct, or by sheer luck.

Others are not always so lucky.

A short blind man was a frequent protester at ICE. Sitting on the sidewalk, just off to the side of the ICE driveway, he was suddenly grabbed by several ICE agents, all geared up for combat, roughed up, not allowed to walk, and carried into the facility. Local television reports showed the film and it was blatantly thuggish conduct by "professional" ICE agents.

This is the behavior of these agents across the country under Trump, masked, not identifiable, just armed agents of the state acting brutally with immunity and impunity. From rural counties losing thousands of steady farm workers to construction sites suddenly losing entire roofing crews, we are seeing our humanity degraded, our economy worsen, and our human rights imperiled or even lost.

Meanwhile, my friend Henry, who has made a career out of making peace - he trains inmates to manage their conflicts with nonviolence, he brings high school students on field trips to learn from peacemakers, and he bridges hostilities between Chicago's African American neighborhoods and his Hispanic Little Village neighborhood - Henry now finds himself protesting ICE because of what he witnesses. Last time he went out he called me. He said, "We don't know what will happen from moment to moment. I need you to bear witness."

It is our duty and our privilege to bear witness. ICE has lost the respect that every government agency should seek, a respect based on admiration and gratitude for a job well done in service to the people of the nation. Now all they have is the ability to generate fear and loathing.

*Tom H. Hastings is coordinator of conflict resolution degree programs at Portland State University. His views, however, are not those of any institution.*

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The Charlotte Post

## Why family values require family wages

The old blues singer had it right: "When a lady gets the blues, she hangs her head and cries. When a man gets the blues, he grabs the train and rides."

The relationship between poverty and family breakdown has always been undeniable.

For decades, conservatives have rightly sounded the alarm about family breakdown — declining marriage rates, rising single parenthood, children without stable households. Strong families are the foundation of strong communities. But here's what we need to be honest about: You cannot build strong families on poverty wages.

The past year has made this undeniable. Grocery prices remain high. Rent keeps climbing. Childcare costs are crushing families. MIT's Living Wage Calculator shows even the cheapest county in America now requires \$33.82 per hour for a modest two-parent household to cover basics. Against a \$7.25 federal minimum wage, families are drowning.

Here's what America literally cannot afford to forget: This year, videos went viral across MAGA social media claiming Donald Trump would raise the minimum wage to \$25 an hour. The videos were false — Trump never made that promise. But their popularity revealed something crucial: even Trump's base knows the current wage system is broken.

When working-class Americans across the political spectrum are that hungry for higher wages, it's

time we stopped treating this as partisan and started treating it as a family crisis.

So, let's imagine the President of the United States was actually willing to establish a family-sustaining wage. What would happen?

Marriages would increase.

Geoffrey McAdam in Indiana works full-time

earning just under \$47,000

a year and can't afford indepen-

dent housing, much less support a family.

Research shows when male

wages decline, marriage

rates plummet — not be-

cause values changed, but

because men like Geoffrey

don't feel they can fulfill

the provider role.

Financial stress is the number one cause of divorce. With family-sustaining wages, couples could weather emergencies instead of one car repair destroying their marriage.

Fathers could be present. Men working multiple jobs miss Little League games, homework help, dinner conversations. Men like Geoffrey who can't afford housing delay fatherhood altogether. When fathers earn family-sustaining wages, they can work one job and actually be there.

Children would thrive. When parents aren't working 60-80 hours just to survive, they're home.

Research shows minimum wage increases improve children's health outcomes, educational achievement, and emotional wellbeing. Child neglect reports drop — not because parents suddenly improve, but because they have resources and capacity to care properly.

Mothers could actually

mother. Anneliese Jackson works in an Elgin restaurant earning \$9 an hour after eight years, alongside single mothers who miss their children's childhoods

working exhausting shifts.

With \$30 an hour in Chicago, those mothers could work one job, be home for dinner, help with homework.

The impossible childcare math — \$10,000-\$15,000 per year per child versus \$15,080 annual earnings at \$7.25/hour — would finally work.

Communities would strengthen. When workers have money in their pockets, they spend it locally. Church attendance increases when parents have Sundays off. Volunteer rates rise. Little League teams get coaches.

Taxpayers would save \$65 billion annually. Right now, we subsidize corporate payrolls through food stamps, Medicaid, housing assistance. That's corporate welfare. A \$25 federal minimum wage, phased in gradually, would reduce government dependency dramatically.

Workers would regain dignity. Luisa Powell worked Kentucky restaurants nearly a decade at \$2.13 an hour, often not even reaching minimum wage with tips. She didn't know her employer was required to make up the difference.

**The math is simple**

If the minimum wage had kept pace with both inflation and increases in corporate productivity since 1968, it would be \$25 today.

Workers haven't gotten less productive — corporations have gotten vastly more profitable while wages stagnated. And with AI poised to drive corporate productivity dramatically higher over the next five years, that gap will only widen unless we act now.

The minimum wage used to be a family wage. One earner could support a

household, buy a modest home, raise children. That was America working as designed.

**The path forward**

Polling shows 55% of voters in swing congressional districts support \$25 minimum wage. In Chicago, 70% support \$30. This crosses party lines because the struggle crosses party lines.

The Living Wage for All coalition is proposing a family-sustaining wage phased in over several years to give businesses time to adjust — with large corporations reaching \$25-\$30 faster and additional time for small businesses. The proposal includes training, technical assistance, and grants, loans, and tax credits to help small businesses make the transition. End all subminimum wages, including the subminimum wage for tipped workers, still just \$2.13.

Those viral MAGA videos weren't really about Trump. They were about working families desperate for wages that actually support family life. Geoffrey McAdam put it bluntly: while "corrupt elected officials, lobbyists, and corporate suits get to line their pockets, those not in high positions of power continue to suffer." He's right that both Democratic and Republican leaders have failed working families on this issue.

But what's clear is that voters in both parties are eager for their leaders to do better. The question is whether we'll finally listen.

*Ben Jealous is former president and CEO of the NAACP and professor of practice at the University of Pennsylvania.*

## 'With These Hands' and racial reckoning

Learning history is one thing. Reckoning with it is another.

"The history of slavery is the history of the United States. It was not peripheral to our founding; it was central to it. It is not irrelevant to our contemporary society; it created it. This history is in our soil, it is in our policies, and it must, too, be in our memories.

Clint Smith wrote these words in the epilogue of his 2021 book "How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America." Smith visited nine places where slavery is deeply ingrained. In this best-selling book which won the National Book Critics Circle Award, he explores monuments and landmarks which either confront or ignore their history and entrenched connections to slavery.

Smith emphasizes that we cannot — and should not — try to escape the stories baked into our history. In holidays, neighborhoods, monuments, and buildings, we are surrounded by our complicated history.

Smith, a poet and staff writer for The Atlantic with a PhD from Harvard, is also

the author of the book "How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America."

Smith's book is a powerful reminder of the ways in which we have failed to reckon with our history.

On Davidson's brick

ladden campus, the sculp-

ture explodes in a grassy

open area between the ear-

liest dormitories and de-

bate halls. That same

brickwork holds the finger-

prints of enslaved laborers.

A plaque reads that the

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and public education, and

acknowledgment of all

who are part of our his-

tory."

It is nearly impossible to

describe the sculpture in

words. A massive pair of

bronze hands rise from the

ground in the heart of the

original campus, reaching

for the sky. Textured,

worn, hardworking, strong,

wrinkled: these hands are

a Davidson graduate.

Two weeks ago, Smith was at Davidson for the dedication of a remarkable sculpture, "With These Hands: A Memorial to the Enslaved and Exploited."

The sculpture is the work of Hank Willis Thomas, one of the most active and acclaimed artists of our time. His work includes not just sculpture but photography, installation art, and mixed media. Many of his large-scale sculptures honor historical figures and themes of social justice and are in iconic locations like the Boston Common and the Brooklyn Bridge.

On Davidson's brick-laden campus, the sculpture explodes in a grassy open area between the earliest dormitories and debate halls. That same brickwork holds the fingerprints of enslaved laborers. A plaque reads that the "site stands as a symbol of Davidson College's ongoing commitment to the quest for truth, research and public education, and acknowledgment of all who are part of our history."

It is nearly impossible to describe the sculpture in words. A massive pair of bronze hands rise from the ground in the heart of the original campus, reaching for the sky. Textured, worn, hardworking, strong, wrinkled: these hands are

problem, because "people need housing, people need health care and we've got the resources to take care of both."

The congresswoman made her remarks during the final installment of her "Charlotte Matters" webinar series, which was put together to discuss how the government shutdown is impacting Charlotte and the rest of North Carolina. Previous topics included healthcare, education and hunger.

Adams said President Donald Trump is being dishonest when he says there's no money to provide America's most vulnerable citizens decent

housing, health care and food assistance.

"You've got money to send \$40 billion over to Argentina or some other place," Adams said. "You've got money to tear down half of the White House to put up a ballroom."

Housing, health care and hunger are not partisan issues, Adams noted.

"It's about being human and everybody needs a decent, affordable place to live," she said.

**Skyrocketing rents, evictions**

Adams was joined by a panel of housing experts and advocates for people experiencing homelessness.

"Liberty Has Arisen," and its purpose which includes cultivating humane instincts and recognizing the dignity and worth of every person. For generations, Foxx emphasized, the principles upon which the college was founded were compromised. Learning, he said, could not be cherished in the presence of human bondage and segregation.

"With These Hands" cannot change our complicated history, and there is so much more work to come. But it can shine a light to help us reckon with it. Through that reckoning, there might just be understanding, growth, and a way forward. Smith, while hopeful about what the sculpture brings to the community, warns that the sculpture is not a "finish line" but rather a "practice" and a "way of life," naming, confronting, engaging, and trying to become the people and communities we aspire to be. "We cannot run from this part of our story," says Smith, "we must wake up and face it every day."

*May Martin Bryan is a lifelong resident of North Carolina and holds degrees from Davidson College and the UNC Schools of Law and Social Work. She holds endless fascination in the books, politics and history on North Carolina.*

## Adams slams shutdown impact on affordable housing

**Continued from page 1A**  
fice has been "significantly reduced," which gives citizens less recourse to address housing discrimination.</p

# Sports

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025



MATT LACZKO | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith football coach Maurice Flowers raises the Commemorative Classic trophy after the Golden Bulls' 26-21 win against Livingstone at McGirt Field on Nov. 8, 2025. JCSU (9-1, 6-1 CIAA) advances to the conference title game with the win, which set a school single-season record for victories.

## All roads lead to title opportunity

Riding best-ever regular season, Johnson C. Smith takes on Virginia Union for CIAA football crown

By Herbert L. White

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The last time Johnson C. Smith played for the CIAA football title, gas cost 36 cents a gallon, Richard Nixon was president and Roberta Flack's "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" was America's No. 1 song.

Times have changed since 1972 and so have the Golden Bulls, who earned a spot in next week's championship round with a 26-21 win Saturday against CIAA rival Livingstone. JCSU, the No. 16 team in Division II, will take on No. 9 Virginia Union, which beat JCSU 28-10 on Sept. 20. In addition to

playing for the conference title, the Golden Bulls (9-1, 6-1 CIAA) set a school record for wins in a season.

"It's definitely sinking in now," said running back Bobby Smith, who established career highs for carries (37) and rushing yards (164) in a game against Livingstone (5-5, 3-4) in addition to scoring a touchdown. "It (sank) in earlier (in the week) when we knew what we had to do coming into this game. We knew that was the goal, and it definitely (sank) in."

Said Golden Bulls coach Maurice Flowers: "It's history, and just so glad to be a JCSU alumnus on a day such as

today. We did so many things that have not been done in so long, and some things that have never been done. And as an alumnus, I'm so proud. As a Charlottean, I'm proud."

Livingstone made JCSU work for everything, pulling ahead 21-20 on E'shawn Carter's 20-yard interception return for a score 12 seconds into the third quarter. But the Golden Bulls, who choked away a chance at last year's title game with a loss at Livingstone, responded. The defense stymied Livingstone and Kelvin Durham's 24-yard strike to Deandre Proctor with 4:59 left provided the margin of victory.

"My mindset, pretty much, was ignore all the outside noise, ignore the records, ignore the rivalry," said linebacker Vincent Hill, who paced the Golden Bulls with seven tackles, three for loss. "It's just another week. It's the biggest game because it's the next game, so I know it was coming in. We had a rough game, but we fought back. That's always a positive - see your team fight."

JCSU took the fight to Livingstone midway through the second quarter when Rontay Dunbar scored on a 42-yard interception return for a 17-7 advantage.

Please see FOOTBALL | 8A

## Growth and development launches JCSU into new territory

By Cameron Williams

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The maturation process of Johnson C. Smith football unfolded before everyone's eyes.

A year ago, the Golden Bulls found themselves preparing for the offseason after losing their final two games to Fayetteville State and Livingstone to finish 8-2 and miss out on the CIAA title game. This season, after failing to Virginia Union in Week 4, the Golden Bulls had no room for error and needed to

win out to reach the postseason showcase. This meant beating Fayetteville State and Livingstone in back-to-back weeks.

It was not an easy feat as the Broncos and Blue Bears gave the Golden Bulls everything they wanted, but JCSU prevailed to finish 9-1 and earn a trip to Durham for a rematch with Virginia Union.

"What I've seen in this group is growth," Golden Bulls coach Maurice Flowers said. "(Saturday was) Senior

Day, so it's fitting that a lot of them started off as what we call day one guys. They were here when there was still grass on the field and the team was 2-7. But the maturation... we lost [to Fayetteville State and Livingstone] last year and that is a part of the maturation process. We had no choice but to look at the example that Virginia Union set. They are the two-time defending CIAA champions."

After losing to Virginia Union, it was JCSU's turn to do what the Panthers did

last year: regroup and win out.

"Coming off that loss, we mowed down a whole lot of doggone good people," Flowers said. "To end it with your rival who's going to play you tough, it shows the growth and maturation."

Flowers took over a struggling program and turned it into a consistent winner with back-to-back seasons with eight wins or more. Once the team opponents regularly scheduled for homecoming, the Golden Bulls are now

Please see DEVELOPMENT | 8A

## Off key against Saints, Panthers need fine tuning

By Jeff Hawkins

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Carolina Panthers need harmony.

To coach Dave Canales, music is a lifelong passion, revealing he plays "a little bit of piano, a little bit of drums and a tiny bit of guitar."

Canales learned to appreciate making music from his grandparents, who founded Mission Ebenezer Family Church in Carson, California, in 1959. Growing up, Canales "spent a lot of time" at church, listening to his grandfather play guitar and grandmother the organ.

"We had all those instruments all the time at church," he said Friday. "It's part of our family history. We would just kind of tinker with different things."

Maybe, but the Panthers appeared out of rhythm in last week's 17-7 loss to the New Orleans Saints. Canales summarized it as a combination of "missed opportunities across the board."

The beat was off.

**Big plays muffle Panthers**

Trevon Moehrig wants to rock and roll. An

Please see OFF KEY | 8A



Carolina Panthers safety Tre'von Moehrig pressures New Orleans quarterback Tyler Shough during an NFL game at Bank of America Stadium. The Saints won 17-7.

## Grant Hill a perfect respite from work

Football. Basketball. Volleyball. Championship games. Playoff possibilities. The list is endless.

There comes a time when a woman needs to step back, take a break and do something special for herself.

That's exactly what I did on Oct. 30.

North Carolina Central men's basketball hosted its tip-off banquet at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel. The event is a fundraiser for the program, and coach LeVelle Moton recruits some of the best people in sports to keynote the banquet.

Former Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski and North Carolina coach Roy Williams were previous speakers. But Moton's best recruiting job by far was snagging good friend Grant Hill.

The F-I-N-E Grant Hill! The first and only time I interviewed Hill was inside a University of Maryland locker room after Duke defeated the Terrapins. Duke haters today are nothing compared to the ACC fans of yesteryear.

I was a freelance sports reporter with my own feelings about the Blue Devils, but they weren't paying my salary. I



BONITA

BEST

## Kahlina slighted in MLS year-end awards voting

By Steve Goldberg

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Minnesota United's Dayne Sinclair was just named the 2026 MLS Goalkeeper of the Year. The other finalists were Matt Freese (New York City FC) and Yohei Takaoka (Vancouver Whitecaps FC).

That the reigning MLS Goalkeeper of the Year, Charlotte FC's Kristijan Kahlina, wasn't in the top three vote getters is worthy of discussion. In the 30 years of this award, no goalkeeper has won it twice in a row, so it's not surprising that the Croatian Wall wasn't the first.

Four have received the honor twice, and the Philadelphia Union's Andre Blake has been

honored three times (2016, '20, '22), so if Kahlina stays at his current level, he may see it again.

One of the two-time winners is current Carolina head coach Donovan Ricketts, who earned it with two teams (LA Galaxy 2010, Portland Timbers 2013). Former Charlotte 49er All-American Jon Busch won in 2008 with the Chicago Fire.

**Great Dayne or good Dayne**

Sinclair certainly had a good year, with 30 goals conceded in 30 games. His MUFC team finished fourth in the MLS West with a 16-8-10 record. The Canadian international led MLS with a 77.93 save percentage, while recording career highs in saves (113) and

shutouts (10). According to MLS, he was the only goalkeeper in 2025 to record a goals against average of 1.00 or lower and a save percentage above 75%.

Takaoka had 13 clean sheets for a Vancouver team that led the West for much of the year before finishing second to San Diego by just one less win. Sinclair had 10, but Freese only 8, while Kahlina had 12.

As for goals conceded, Sinclair was tops among keepers playing 30 or more matches. Takaoka was very good with 38 in 34. Freese conceded 42 goals in 31 games. Kahlina let in 44 over 32 games but he also faced more shots than any of the top three, which had

Please see KRISTIJAN | 8A

Please see GRANT | 8A



MATT LACZKO | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith cornerback Rontay Dunbar returns an interception 42 yards for a touchdown in the Golden Bulls' 26-21 win against CIAA rival in the regular season finale for both teams.

## Development launches JC Smith into rare air

Continued from page 7A

blowing out. It has been a slow build, but growing a perennial winner takes time.

"Most of the time, when you are going to build a championship program, you've got to take some steps and build," Flowers said. "And guess what's going to come with that? Some heartbreak and some lessons. That's what we've been doing. We've been learning lessons along the way."

Now, the Golden Bulls have their biggest chance to show their maturation against Virginia Union for the third time in two seasons.

"I know a part of the message is not going to be about revenge," Flowers said. "Because they beat us, revenge doesn't do anything as far as your actual execution. That game taught us a lot. ... What our team knows the message after that game was that Virginia Union played championship level football. They looked like the two-time defending champion and we fell short."

"I'm looking forward to it. I know we are going to have a good week of practice and it's going to have a lot of energy. We are going to formulate a good plan to go to Durham and play for the 2025 CIAA championship."

## Football history beckons the Golden Bulls in postseason

Continued from page 7A

vantage, but the Blue Bears rallied behind Elijah Alexander's 65-yard pass to Davyn Reid (3 catches, 156 yards, 2 TDs) to climb back into contention. The Golden Bulls, who have won six straight, showed their mettle down the stretch despite adversity - something last year's team didn't do.

"Before you could even talk about this season, you have to really go back to last season at this moment where we didn't finish strong at 8-0 and then lost the last two, lost opportunities to go to the championship game," Flowers said. "Those are learning lessons."

After six weeks of must-win drama, the Golden Bulls have an opportunity to square the season series against Virginia Union, which has won seven straight games. The Panthers were picked to finish first in the preseason CIAA coaches' poll while JCSU was second.

"Of course, we (get) to see them again," Smith said. "When we see them again, we've got to have a good game, you know? It's got to be a different game for us."

Said Hill: "It just took a lot of focus getting ourselves back together, not repeating old bad habits, not having any bad habits, and noticed those flaws early. We ... didn't take a loss. We learned a lesson, so we took that lesson, and we've just gotten better from it, we just grew together."

The winningest team in JCSU history has at least one more chance to break the 10-win barrier. There's more to accomplish, more firsts to earn and an opportunity to realize them.

"It feels great to be a part of it," Smith said. "Being a redshirt freshman, having a big role in it also feels great. I'm just very grateful, man. That's it. I'm very grateful."

## Grant Hill a respite from work

Continued from page 7A

dreaded going into that locker room to interview some snooty Dookies! Hill had a monster game, so every reporter was at his locker. I figured he wouldn't have much time for a freelancer writing for a small Black publication.

But he did. He was - gasp! - nice. Humble. Accommodating. F-I-N-E! From Duke? That could mean only one thing: serial killer. There had to be something wrong somewhere.

I made it my personal mission to follow his career and wait for the nut to crack so I could tell my Duke friends, "I told you so."

Hill graduated Duke with honors, a couple of national championships and ACC Player of the Year Award, but no arrests. Dang!

The Detroit Pistons drafted him in 1994 with the third overall pick. He played through 19 injury-filled seasons but still made seven NBA All-Star Games, earned the 1994 Rookie of the Year Award and more, but no arrests, no scandals. Dang!

The closest Hill got to controversy was firing back at former Michigan and NBA player Jalen Rose for calling Duke's Black basketball players "Uncle Toms" - which made him even sexier.

Hill married his sweetheart, Canadian

singer-songwriter Tamia Washington-Hill, in 1999. They have two daughters. Wife beater? No. Womanizer? No.

Since his retirement in 2013, Hill has carved out an impressive executive and sports broadcasting career. He's a minority owner of the Atlanta Hawks, managing director of USA Basketball and an analyst for "NBA on NBC," among other things.

Now, he's an author. "Game: An Autobiography" flew off the tables at the banquet.

He's better looking at 53 than that young pup sitting in a Maryland locker room. His banquet speech was inspirational, what I can remember. My main objective was not to be caught drooling.

"I had wonderful experiences at NCCU," he said. "I took some classes. Got my haircut at NCCU. Had my first Krispy Kreme donut. Ate in the cafeteria. Went to parties."

Hill also admitted that he developed a crush on one of the campus librarians, but she blew him off.

If she later told her friends what she did, I hope they told her to turn in her female card because something was definitely missing.

Keep aging gracefully, Grant Hill. I wave the white flag.

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

## Magnificent Seven jump into second round of NC playoffs pool

By Herbert L. White

herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Mecklenburg County's top high school football teams will take another step toward postseason glory this week.

The top three teams in The Post's Magnificent Seven - top-ranked Hough, No. 2 West Charlotte and No. 3 Independence - will open their postseasns after earning first-round byes last week. Hough and

West Charlotte are in the 8A tournament while Independence is in 7A. No. 5 Myers Park and unranked Mallard Creek also open in 8A this week.

Mallard Creek (7-3), one of four Mecklenburg squads to earn first-round byes, takes on West Forsyth (9-2) in the 8A playoffs. A win could bump the Mavericks back into the Magnificent Seven.

Here's this week's Magnificent Seven, with overall

record in parentheses and regular season ranking:

Hough (10-0, first). The top ranked squad takes on No. 7 Palisades after earning an opening round bye. The Huskies have been the class of Mecklenburg during the regular season, but can they finally put together a title run in the new 8A classification?

West Charlotte (8-2, second). The Lions, who also earned a bye, have title ex-

## Off key against the Saints, Panthers need fine tuning

Continued from page 7A

aspiring guitarist who plans to start a heavy metal band next offseason, the Panthers' safety didn't play in time on the Saints' first big play Sunday.

The Saints' offense entered Sunday ranked No. 29 in the NFL, averaging 287.1 yards per game. They compiled 388 yards against the Panthers (5-5).

Leading 7-0 after running back Rico Dowdle capped the Panthers' opening drive with a 5-yard touchdown run, the defense responded initially by forcing the Saints (2-8) into a third-and-12 play on their first series.

Panthers rookie Nic Scourton, rushing from the near edge, failed to bring down Saints quarterback Tyler Shough, who scrambled and discovered delivered a 52-yard pass to Juwan Johnson. The Saints' tight end ran behind Moehrig, who lost contain, leading to an early field goal.

"We have to do a better job containing him and stay attached," Canales said. "We did not get that done."

The Saints exploited the Panthers' secondary again in the second quarter. Cornerback Jaycee Horn ran man-on-man with wide receiver Chris Olave, who took advantage of a falling Horn to convert a 62-yard touchdown pass, lifting the Saints to a 10-7 advantage.

It proved to be the game-winning play.

"Jaycee will be the first to tell you he could have made that play," Canales said. "Give credit to the Saints, they came up with some big plays, some explosives and that's an area we have to make sure and shore up. There were some great one-on-one opportunities that they took advantage of."

"They just made their plays."

The Saints, who entered Sunday ranked No. 23 in rush defense at 129.4 yards per game, surrendered just 73 to the Panthers. Dowdle finished with 53 yards on 18 carries. Chuba Hubbard compiled 14 yards on three attempts.

"I'm sure we have complements to our

run game and they did a fantastic job of taking care of it," Canales said. "I have to make sure we put our heads together and gameplan to make sure we have answers when the other team makes it difficult to run the ball."

**Trevon Moehrig shreds NFL label**

In aiming to bolster the Carolina's historically poor defense from 2024, general manager Dan Morgan targeted Moehrig, one of the league's top-tackling safeties, to a three-year, \$51 million free-agent contract last offseason. Moehrig's interest in playing the guitar helped him from an early bond with Canales.

"I learned that about Tre early on, with some of the things he's interested in," Canales said. "I'm mostly interested in the rock band he's creating in the secondary."

Through 10 games, Moehrig compiled 58 tackles, one sack and an interception in last week's upset win at Green Bay. Along with five tackles and two passes defended, Moehrig earned NFC Defensive Player of the Week honors, becoming the franchise's first safety to win the award since Ramon Harper in 2014.

On Sunday, Moehrig collected seven tackles, but he did not sing anyone's praises. He declined comment, pointing to fresh stitches on his upper lip.

Moehrig learned to appreciate heavy metal music in high school by listening to tunes his coaches at Smithson Valley (Texas) High played during practices and weight-lifting sessions.

"That's all they played," Moehrig told "Good Morning Football" on Thursday. "And I grew up on Guitar Hero."

His joy in the video music game led to a broader interest in learning to play the "songs I was playing" for real.

"I love guitar," Moehrig said. "It's something I picked up a few years ago in the offseason."

Moehrig is focused on perfecting the guitar parts of the hard-pounding song, "One," by Metallica.

"That's kind of one of my favorites," he said. "We're going to try and get (a band) going this offseason."

Before then, Moehrig will need to work to develop more harmony in Charlotte.



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

A year after earning MLS's Goalkeeper of the Year, Charlotte FC's Kristijan Kahlina didn't crack the top three in 2025.

## Kristijan Kahlina slighted in MLS year-end awards voting

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him leading the league in saves with 129.

Saves are a double-edged category as it indicates a more porous overall defense. After being one of the top two defenses in Dean Smith's first year with Charlotte, the Crown scored nine more goals in 2025 than last season (55-46), but they also conceded nine more (46) than last year's second-best MLS total of 37. As such, the goal differential effectively did not change.

St. Clair made 113 saves, Freese 96, and Takaoka 88, so they were called upon far less than Kahlina.

Even though he finished second in the voting statistically, Freese is the surprise in the top three, perhaps buoyed by his recent starting position with the U.S. Men's National Team. Besides Kahlina, the keeper who merited more attention is Roman Celetano.

The FC Cincinnati netminder finished second to Bürki in 2023 and has been solid again this season with 10 clean sheets, conceding 36 goals in 30 matches, and making 87 saves.

**Voting skews differently**

No one is accusing the league of voter fraud, but maybe there's a case for voter weirdness. Goalkeeper of the Year is an award voted on by MLS club technical staff,

media, and players.

Over the last three years, the only group to correctly pick the eventual winner with the highest percentage of their votes has been the media. It was the media and club voters that swayed the day for Kahlina last year and St. Clair this time around. Bürki was a clear preference by all three groups in 2023, winning by 63%. Kahlina's margin was 24%. St. Clair's 12%.

It's probably more of a slight that Kahlina wasn't named to the 2024 MLS All-Star team, neither in the fan vote, which chose Maarten Paes of Dallas, nor by Columbus coach Wilfried Nancy, who chose Roman Bürki of St. Louis and Hugo Lloris of LAFC.

Lloris was a big-name keeper on the best team in the MLS. Bürki was the 2023 Goalkeeper of the Year for a surprisingly good first-year team, but St. Louis finished 12th last season and would come in 13th this year.

That Kahlina wasn't named to the All-Star team must be due to the poor stretch Charlotte experienced from late April to late June, when nine of 11 games were on the road and uncharacteristic defensive errors plagued the Crown. Kahlina was also dealing with the birth of his second child in mid-May.

steady force all season and continued that trajectory by sending Ardrey Kell packing in the first round. A trip to West Charlotte looms for their toughest test of the season.

Palisades (8-3, seventh). The Pumas, seeded ninth in 8A, downed a determined No. 8 South Mecklenburg squad 35-32 in the first-round opener. Their reward is No. 1 Hough.

start in the 6A tournament with a 35-0 win against Ragsdale. Next up is Sun Valley.

Myers Park (8-2, fifth). First round byes are familiar in the Magnificent Seven and the Mustangs got one as well. They'll host Chambers (5-6) in the 8A second round. The Cougars beat Pinecrest 32-31 in the first round.

Providence (8-3, sixth). The Panthers have been a