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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2007

SECTION B

IN MY OPINION



Danyne Romine Powell

## Charlotte still ignores its homeless

I saw him again on Sunday. The first time, his old swagger had almost returned as he sauntered down East Boulevard, across Scott, toward town.

Later in the afternoon, his shoulders drooped, and a beer can dangled from his right hand. His demeanor gave new depth to the word "weary."

He can't last the winter, I thought, as I watched the man whose long blond hair and deeply sunburned face have grown familiar to travelers along two streets that cross Sugar Creek - East and Morehead.

In recent weeks, I've seen him leaning against telephone poles, holding up two fingers in a peace sign. I've seen him wink as cars whizzed by, a near-twinkle in his eyes.

But lately it seems a new hopelessness has burrowed in.

### Shelter closes

Earlier in the day, I read our front-page story: "Shelter Closes to Women." And the smaller headline beneath: "Only 12 churches have answered call for help ..."

Is it my imagination or was there a slightly judgmental spin in the word *only*? Could the implication be that churches should be the ones to step up and shelter our city's homeless?

Why? We didn't turn to churches and synagogues when we wanted a new baseball stadium.

Or the five new cultural arts venues coming to uptown - to the tune of \$158.5 million.

In Charlotte, we put our money into sparkle and gleam - things that amuse, entertain and enhance us.

Fine. But what we won't face in this city is that the homeless, often dirty and down-and-out, are also part of us.

### Nice views

Charlotte prides itself on its views.

From the high-rise Trade-Mark project on West Trade, I hear, you can see the uptown bank buildings, the soft greens of Fourth Ward Park and Elmwood Cemetery.

Sounds lovely. What you don't often see from those heights are the homeless.

The homeless cling to the cool, dry spaces under bridges, the low-hanging branches of the woods, the warm, loamy beds beneath bushes.

This population includes not just those momentarily down on their luck. It holds the long-addicted, the mentally ill, the disabled, the elderly.

If the homeless man who travels East Boulevard should die this year, many of us will want to honor his memory.

We'll gather to mourn and weep, and we'll say to ourselves, Such good people we are. So humane. So thoughtful. So progressive.

And once more, sentimentality will have trumped our good sense. We will have soothed our guilt and tamped down our denial.

And we will not have lifted one concrete finger in response to the ongoing predicament of men and women in our midst without shelter.

Baseball stadiums crumble. Arts complexes fall away.

The homeless abide. And it's up to us - and our gleaming city - to care for them with intelligence and compassion.

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# Easley won't rehire ex-trooper

Governor 'adamant' despite judge's ruling citing uneven punishment for sex on duty

**Highway Patrol head hired in '04 said he made it clear that type of behavior not acceptable**

Associated Press

RALEIGH — Gov. Mike Easley won't let a Highway Patrol trooper return to the job, even though a judge says the trooper

is being treated differently from others who also had sex on the job, a spokesman says.

"The governor is adamant that we're not going to give the badge of law enforcement officer to somebody with issues of moral turpitude," Easley spokesman Seth Efron said in an e-mail. "Now that the judge has ruled, she can give that officer a job. But he won't be working for the state Highway Patrol as long as Governor Easley is in office."

A state administrative law judge said last week that former Trooper Monty Stevens Poarch's behavior was egregious enough to warrant being fired. But she also ruled that Poarch, fired in 2003 for having extramarital sex in his patrol car and at a patrol office, should get his job back and back pay.

Judge Melissa Owens Lassiter said Poarch's attorney should have the opportunity to present other cases in which troopers had sex while on duty, including

a trooper who had sex with the same woman as Poarch.

Another trooper was not fired although he also had sex while on duty and made more than 20 threatening calls to his ex-wife.

But those cases occurred while Cmdr. Richard Holden led the patrol from 1999 to 2004.

Fletcher Clay, who became patrol commander in July 2004, said he has "made it crystal clear these types of behaviors are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Troopers know that if they

engage in this type of behavior their jobs will be in jeopardy."

Highway Patrol officials have said they plan an appeal to the State Personnel Commission.

Patrol spokesman Lt. Everett Clendenin said the patrol cannot reopen the disciplinary cases of troopers who committed similar behavior but were allowed to remain on the force under Holden.

Poarch is now a lieutenant with the sheriff's department in Caldwell County.

# New laws douse a lot of smoking on campuses in UNC system



T. ORTEGA GAINES - ogaines@charlotteobserver.com

**A UNC Charlotte student smokes in the quad area on campus. A new law passed this summer will ban smoking in all state buildings and another law would give campus administrators the authority to limit smoking outside of buildings for up to 100 feet.**

## Inside banned; outside use can be limited

BY APRIL BETHEA  
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Smokers may soon have to walk a bit farther to light up a cigarette on UNC system campuses.

Many universities already outlaw smoking in main buildings and some dormitories.

But under a new law approved this summer, smoking will be banned in all state buildings, including those on University of North Carolina system campuses, starting in January. Some spaces in campus residence halls will still be open to smokers, but will go smoke-free next school year.

Another new law gives UNC system campus administrators the authority to limit smoking outside of buildings for up to 100 feet.

UNC Charlotte's Student Senate has recommended the university merely suggest a 10-foot smoke-free zone in front of buildings, rather than a ban. University officials will spend the coming months weighing how to respond to the new laws, said David Broome, UNCC's student counsel. N.C. State University has not yet

proposed a plan.

Other UNC campuses have already moved on smoking limits.

Appalachian State University in Boone banned smoking in its residence halls starting this school year, and officials will seek input on further changes this semester.

East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., imposed a 25-foot "smoke-free" zone around its facilities this summer; eventually administrators hope to extend it to 100 feet.

Meanwhile, a proposal from UNC Chapel Hill would ban smoking from the vast majority of campus. The 100-foot limit would cover most of the university's grounds.

"Increasing the no-smoking zone would significantly reduce the potential for exposure to second-hand smoke and reinforce our dedication to a healthy work and learning environment," Chancellor James Moeser said in a letter asking for campus support of the proposal.

The university's faculty and staff have backed the plan, while students can weigh

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## Smoking Policies at Charlotte-area Campuses

**Belmont Abbey:** Banned from main buildings and two newly renovated dormitories. Will be banned inside and within 25 feet of all student housing in 2008.

**Central Piedmont Community College:** No smoking inside buildings, but some campuses have designated areas outside.

**Davidson:** Not allowed inside any building.

**Johnson & Wales:** Permitted only in designated outside areas.

**Johnson C. Smith:** Permitted only in designated outside areas.

**Gardner-Webb:** Banned all tobacco products this fall.

**Lenoir-Rhyne:** Smoking banned inside campus facilities.

**Pfeiffer:** Not allowed in any building.

**Queens University of Charlotte:** Not permitted in buildings or within 25 feet of air intakes (windows, vents, doors).

**Wingate:** Not permitted in buildings. Student government wants campus tobacco-free by fall 2008.

## Transit Vote CATS at a Crossroads

# Gantt joins fight to protect transit tax

Ex-mayor part of effort to woo black voters

BY STEVE HARRISON  
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Former Charlotte Mayor Harvey Gantt urged black voters Monday to keep Mecklenburg's transit tax, and said they should put aside concerns over how the tax is being implemented and look at the "bigger picture."

Gantt's comments came at a news conference to announce the formation of the African American Coalition Against Transit Tax Repeal. Black precincts voted overwhelmingly in favor of the transit tax in 1998, but many voters today appear disillusioned about the half-cent tax.

A Charlotte Observer/WCNC News poll in August found that 51 percent of black voters said they would vote to repeal the tax. A petition drive conducted earlier this year that placed the transit tax on the Nov. 6 ballot had strong support in predominantly African American neighborhoods.

"Polls may show those statistics, but when the community is educated - when they understand the implications - they will vote with their best interest," said Gantt, who is co-chairing the group with former Charlotte City Council member Ron Leeper.

Gantt, mayor from 1983 to 1987, and Leeper spoke at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg government center, and were flanked by about 25 other black leaders.

"We're going to be connecting neighborhoods," Gantt said after the news conference. "We will be asking a network of ministers to talk about the issue."

One source of frustration in



Gantt

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## ADVANCEMENT VIA INDIVIDUAL DETERMINATION

# AVID program aims to put more kids on college track

Strategies emphasize collaboration, organization

BY LINDSAY POLLARD  
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When West Mecklenburg High English teacher Rhiannon Riley asked students to write a thesis statement on the legal use of cell phones while driving, they sat in groups of three and four and discussed how they'd phrase their statements.

They tossed around ideas and offered feedback, becoming more confident be-

cause they had a sounding board, Riley said.

Such collaborative work is a key part of the Advancement Via Individual Determination program, which West Mecklenburg is integrating into all sophomore English classes this year.

AVID is designed for students "in the academic middle" - B, C or D students who want to attend college. It teaches organizational skills, study habits, and how to form higher-level questions and learn collaboratively, and emphasizes preparing for college.

West Meck and other Charlotte-Meck-

SEE AVID | 6B



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**Tenth-grade teacher Rhiannon Riley (center) instructs her students (from left) LaParis Dixon, 15; Ashlyn Hendy, 16; Quina Alston, 15; and Kenyatta Young, 15, about a group project at West Mecklenburg High School.**