

News Briefs

Conyers receives humanitarian award

Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), received the Soul and Spirit Humanitarian Award Feb. 27 at the 19th annual Damon J. Keith Soul Food Luncheon at the Theodore Levin U.S. Courthouse. Conyers, a representative since 1964, was chosen because of his many notable contributions.

Conyers is a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus. He is the second most senior member of the House and is ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee. He represents the 14th Congressional District.

See page A-6 for additional information on the accomplishments of John Conyers.

Killing at church shocks community

A fatal shooting shook the congregation of Zion Hope Baptist Church on the city's east side during the 11 a.m. service on Feb. 26.

According to reports, Kevin L. Collins, 22, shot and killed Rosa Williams, 38, the mother of his girlfriend, after she refused to reveal the girlfriend's whereabouts. The shooting also injured Williams' 9-year-old goddaughter.

Collins also shot a man in an attempted carjacking before taking his own life. The man, identified as Alarie Davis, 54,

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Detroit Receiving Hospital offers "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam.
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Mobile clinic helps families and children.
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www.michchronicle.com

Coleman Young Jr. announces candidacy for state representative



Coleman Young Jr.

By Melody Deniece Moore
CHRONICLE EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Following in his famous father's footsteps, Coleman A. Young Jr. has decided to run for political office.

Young, 23, will run for a state representative position in the Fourth District, challenging incumbent Mary Waters. Although he has no previous political experience, Young said he has the heart and the passion to help build Detroit and the state

of Michigan. He moved back to Detroit last year after spending several years on the East Coast.

While there, Young dabbled in acting, but now he plans to put all that on hold to pursue a political career. If elected, Young said his first goal would be to improve communication between Detroit and the State of Michigan.

"I want to bring Michigan back to where it belongs as a place of carry on the legacy of my father," Young said. "It starts with the dynamic revolution in

Michigan and then it will go through the country.

"I've looked at this really hard and this is the best decision. I really want to serve the citizens of Detroit after looking at my father's great history. I have an obligation to give back to the citizens of Detroit, but not just because of what I have received here."

Young's father served as Detroit's mayor for 20 years, until 1994, when he decided against running for another

term. Detroit's longest-serving mayor died in 1997.

During his term, Coleman A. Young Sr., who was Detroit's first Black mayor, further integrated the Detroit Police Department. The City County Building and City Airport were renamed in his honor.

Each year, younger candidates are throwing their hats into the political ring. Young said this marks the start of a change-

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CINEMATIC EXPOSURE...

Detroit's best-kept secret: Independent filmmakers struggle for national attention

By Cornelius A. Fortune
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

The moving image: a visual landscape enlarged on a silver screen; the ghostly world of celluloid running 24 frames per second...unpredictable in its reach; packed theater seats and the smell of popcorn...sodas being slurped. A lone infant bawling in its mother's arms; the person behind you kicking your seat, over and over again, clueless and uncaring – we've all experienced it at one time or another, and it casts somewhat of a dark cloud on the movie-going experience.

Despite the distractions, there is a fundamental reason why we still go to the movies: simply put, a good movie transports you to another world, and an even better one (a great one) becomes something more – an experience you take with you long after the final credit has disappeared from the screen.

For many, Hollywood is synonymous with moviemaking and conjures images of success, glamour, the red carpet, and yes, even scandal. As the perception goes, Hollywood is where a filmmaker can find work (presumably), make a lot of money (presumably), make a name for themselves (yes, that too, presumably), but what about filmmakers who have gone against this, who have chosen to stay in the Motor City? Detroit films taste different from Hollywood films – there's a necessary rawness, creativity and originality obvious in every frame.

Independent Detroit filmmaking has slowly begun to make an impression on the world, thanks to a new generation of filmmakers – all under the age of 40.

This community of filmmakers is building a film base and doing it quietly without the aid of much press, or even money (maybe word of mouth, but even that is limited). Some of these films will be available on DVD at your local video store and you probably have not heard of any of them since they are among Detroit's best-kept secrets.

Unlike their Hollywood counterparts, these serious film auteurs have found a way to band together and make lasting art, with less than a third of the money given to most other filmmakers, and against stereotype. These African Americans are working together, and they like each other.

"We're a growing community of filmmakers," said Nicole Sylvester, a local filmmaker, and the owner of Autumn Rain Features, LLC, a company she formed in 2002. "We all like each other. Without each other, we wouldn't have survived."



Ron Vainwright photo

THOMAS DUNCAN (left), and William Cartwright are the owners of The Woodward, located inside the Compuware building.

New restaurant highlights characteristics in Detroit

By Melody Deniece Moore
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Owners William Cartwright and Thomas Duncan are not only first cousins; they are also owners of The Woodward, a restaurant in the Compuware building.

Duncan and Cartwright formed DunWright Development, the parent company to The Woodward. Additional partners in the restaurant are former Detroit Lions player Ron Rice Jr. and Pittsburgh Steeler quarterback Charlie Batch, also a native Detroit.

Duncan, 27, and Cartwright, 26, began planning for the restaurant three years ago, as they witnessed a rebirth in

downtown Detroit.

"(The Woodward) is part of the renewal in Detroit," Duncan said. "We saw an opportunity in the marketplace and we want to show that downtown is a viable marketplace for retail."

"We are native Detroiters and we wanted to give back to the city," Cartwright said. "This restaurant will give the young urban professionals a place to go."

Although the Compuware building features restaurants such as the Hard Rock Café and other smaller eateries, there was no restaurant for those seeking fine dining.

Cartwright and Duncan care-
See The Woodward page A-4



LOCAL FILMMAKER Nicole Sylvester points out where she wants the camera to move for the next shot. — Photos courtesy of Brian Heath



BRIAN HEATH discusses the anatomy of a scene.



ALISA LOMAX crafts a scene from her mind's eye.

Sylvester holds the pieces of the group together. All of the filmmakers interviewed for this story acknowledged their debt to her, and she is acquainted with everything that goes on in the city. She often coordinates with producers coming into Detroit. For her, filmmaking is a goal that has become a reality; it is how she makes her living.

She made her first film, "The Stop," which was accepted into competition at the Detroit and

See Black Filmmakers page A-4

Chronicle to host 'Pancakes and Politics' series

The Michigan Chronicle has announced the launch of "Pancakes and Politics," a four-part breakfast forum series hosted by the newspaper to highlight a variety of current, pressing business, civic and political issues. The forums will take place at the Detroit Athletic Club and will cater to Southeast Michigan's business and political leaders. The first forum, "The Economy, Regionalism and Race Relations," will take place on Friday, March 31. The session is scheduled to begin at 7:30 a.m. Guest speakers will be announced at a later date.

"This is a nationwide effort by the parent company (Real Times) to develop a multimedia growth strategy for all the media properties," said Real Times spokesman Shaun Wilson. Other Black publications in the Real Times chain include the Michigan FrontPAGE, the Chicago Defender, the New Pittsburgh Courier and the Memphis Tri-State Defender.

"The 'Pancakes and Politics' series is designed to attract a diverse group of policy and decision makers in Southeast Michigan to generate dialogue and debate around the issues that affect the economic and

See Politics page A-4



Not in my house — Lakesha Harvey photo

Pistons All-Star center Ben Wallace (No. 3) rejects a shot by Cleveland forward Donyell Marshall during Detroit's 90-78 victory over the Cavaliers Sunday at The Palace. Wallace had 11 points, 19 rebounds, five blocked shots and four steals in the contest.

Investing in college savings plans requires research

Many investors are making decisions for their long-term financial goals, including saving for college through Michigan Educational Savings Plans (which are the national Section 529 college savings plans). With increasing numbers of investors turning to these plans to help finance higher education costs, the Office of Financial and Insurance Services (OFIS) wants to ensure consumers are well-informed before making investment decisions.

"It pays to do your homework before investing in a college savings plan," said OFIS

Commissioner Linda Watters. "And to educate yourself about the differences among the many plans offered today, in order to choose the plan that's right for you."

Watters stressed that college savings plan choices are growing at a fast pace and noted that the most recent statistics from the College Savings Plan Network (an affiliate of the National Association of State Treasurers) showed that state-sponsored 529 college savings plans hold more than \$72.4 billion in

See College page A-4



THE FUTURE of Detroit filmmaking as represented by Nicole Sylvester (left), Frank Stovall, Curtis “Al-Nuke” Franklin, Marlon Reid and Brian Heath. The group has supported each other’s film projects and they are hoping to create their own Detroit-based studio. — Ron Wainwright photo

Black filmmakers

Windsor International Festival of Film, and won Best Short at the Cinema Shorts Internet Film Festival. Her most recent film is “Layla’s Girl,” loosely based upon her estranged mother’s death. She has also received the Cable ICE award for her special, “The North American International Auto Show.”

“The films that we do – regardless of the budget level – look good because we understand film,” she said. “We’re not just out here running around with a camera calling ourselves filmmakers. We continue to study and that’s what we believe in.”

The state of Black filmmaking in Detroit is good in her opinion, even though there is still work to be done.

“I think it’s at a good point,” she said. “We’ve been doing this for a while now. I believe that Alisa (her business partner), myself and Al-Nuke (an independent filmmaker) are going to go to the next level. We as filmmakers have different voices. The biggest obstacle is not whether you’re Black or not, is money.”

As a producer, Sylvester has helped to put out products by other filmmakers, the latest being the urban drama “17000 Block,” a film by rapper-turned-filmmaker Curtis “Al Nuke” Franklin, a former host of the cable show “Video Vibes.” His background is what he calls the real life “Get Rich or Die Trying.”

“I believe in my projects,” said Franklin. “If I have to knock door-to-door, video stores, record stores, Best Buy, whatever I’ve got to do, I’m going to do it. I believe that a lot of filmmakers in Detroit have the mentality of backpack filmmakers, meaning that they’re waiting on someone to finish their projects. We have to finish our projects, we have to put our projects out, we have to distribute our projects. We can’t wait on (anyone).”

“17000 Block” follows the life of Buck, the young protagonist (played by Franklin) who is caught between the codes of loyalty and the harsh realities of surviving life in the ghetto as a notorious drug dealer. Nuke does not gloss over anything; first and foremost, he is “a hustler,” but he has thrown a positive spin on the term.

The Woodward

fully made plans for the opening of their restaurant. Representatives from the Compuware building notified them, requesting that The Woodward be housed there.

Rice said he stepped in as a partner because he was looking for projects that would help move the city forward.

“I see myself getting involved with two exceptional men who are like-minded,” said Rice, 33. “When they presented the idea to me, I was at a point in my life when I was getting ready to do something, not just anything, but something special in the city that would make a difference.”

Inside The Woodward are many things that reflect the essence of Detroit. Dishes include White Chicken Chili, which includes tender pieces of chicken with white beans, vegetables and cumin; The Woodward Strip, a 12-ounce pan-seared New York strip covered with cracked pepper and kosher salt; the Augustus Caesar salad with Romaine hearts, shaved parmesan, tossed in lemon Caesar dressing and cracked pepper.

The Woodward’s signature martinis include DunWright,

“I’ll sell my house to put my movie out if I need to, that’s how I feel. The next one I’m doing is a \$1.5 million dollar film,” he said. “With ‘R.A.C.E.’, they’re either going to love me or hate me. This film is an epic. It will show you things in our society and how we’re against each other.”

Franklin credits Sylvester with helping him put his film career on the map.

“Nicole Sylvester has been a filmmaker in Detroit when there was no film market,” he said. “She was here, and she has lived for what she believes in – she was the one that pushed me to become a full-time filmmaker. She links everyone together. It’s a small circle and I believe it’s going to stay small because we’re not stabbing each other in the back. We’re all able to work with one another and we respect one another.”

Brian Heath, a photographer-turned-documentary-filmmaker, has a real problem with the boxes most Black filmmakers are thrown into.

“Space or fantasy? We don’t have the opportunity to do those types of films because our films have to be about real life in the ghetto or drug related,” he said. “We’re stuck in a place where we still have to tell the bad stories for our films to happen. Why do our films have to use the stereotypes that (many) people have about us?”

His advice to upcoming filmmakers is to study the classics.

“Watch as many old black and white films as possible to understand lighting and composition,” he said. “Those are the most important things.”

Heath also sees the acting talent in Detroit as topnotch.

“We’ve got some of the best actors coming out of Detroit and going to Hollywood on a regular basis and getting jobs. The acting database pool is extremely good,” he said.

“I’m a strong believer that Detroit is on the rise,” said Frank Stovall, a filmmaker currently working on a new documentary on poetry in Detroit: “SPIT: The Evolution of Revolution.” “I believe the current administration we have on the mayoral level is ready to embrace the arts more.”

Stovall, who studied film-

making at Eastern Michigan University and the University of Michigan, chooses to stay in Detroit because it is the ideal location for him.

“There’s a lot of undiscovered talent in Detroit,” he said. “My desire is to become a big fish in a small pond in Detroit’s arts community, so that’s why I stay here. If the circle is limited, if you go to the coast already with visual résumé, already with recognition, it’s quicker, that much simpler. As Detroit filmmakers our largest obstacle is just establishing that film can be professionally created in a workspace that’s not on the East Coast or West Coast. Filmmaking in Detroit is on the rise.”

Alisa Lomax has made the short films, “Nobody Knows” and “Minor Blues,” and the television programs, “Shape Up Michigan,” “Babesworld” and “A Moment in Our History.” She has also done commercials for Ford Motor Co., Kmart and Marygrove College. Lomax thought she was going to be a business major, but her exposure to independent film changed her perspective. She and Sylvester met in 1999, and their partnership has remained strong and productive.

“I have to say it’s been great,” she said. “I liked her instantly, so we started working together and we have complementary talents. I consider myself a director first, and I don’t know if I would trust someone else to write them.”

Lomax wants to try something different, to test the limits of cinema.

“I feel that the stories, the ideas I have, make me different,” she said. “I feel very strongly about your being able to live and work where you want to live and work. Your stories come from wherever you are. I don’t feel as if you have to go to L.A. That’s what independence is.”

To make donations, give grants or other funding to Autumn Rain Features, or to find out more about “17000 Block,” “Layla’s Girl” and other film projects, call (313) 361-6408, visit www.autumnrainfeatures.com, or e-mail ncsly@aol.com.

these (projects), we agreed.”

“I think it is important to develop a network of like-minded people who can move ahead,” Porcher said. “The city is an untapped jewel that we have to start developing.”

Although Porcher also owns restaurants, he noted that people enjoy having dining options.

The 4,100 square-foot restaurant features a circular bar that reflects Campus Martius Park. The upscale restaurant is perfect as a business meeting location or as a first-class place to dine evenings or other times.

The restaurant also reflects the 1807 streetscape of Woodward Avenue. The hard wood floors and 13-foot ceilings create a comfortable and sophisticated environment

Meals range from \$13 to \$27 and validated parking is available in the Compuware structure. Valet parking is also available at the front entrance.

Hours are Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to midnight; and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

For additional information, call (313) 964-4444.

NACWC

“I learned to love the organization,” she said. “Once you start reading about it and you meet some of the people (you find) it’s the greatest sisterhood in this country, and I’ve been with it ever since.”

Cooper served as both an employee and as a volunteer, and as an officer on every level.

“It just becomes a part of you. You learn to love it and you just stay with it because you believe in what it does.”

The motto NACWC is “Lifting as we climb.”

“This is one of the greatest sisterhoods in the United States,” she said, “It’s too bad that people don’t know about it, but we’re trying to do more along that line. I like to refer to it as walking softly and carrying a big stick. We do a lot of community work, but we don’t make a lot of noise. We just do what needs to be done.”

NACWC is not just about women, however. The group is also interested in helping men and women to coexist and work together, and much of that starts with the family.

“You can develop a young woman to her final womanhood as much as you want, but if there are no fine men for her to be involved with, then that’s what you get,” she said. “And so we (know) that we need to teach the male and the female how to relate to each other and to the greater society, so this a way of stopping as much (domestic violence) as we possibly can. We don’t get on TV and make a whole lot of noise. We do what we do in a quiet, but forceful

College

assets.

The State of Michigan administers the Michigan Education Savings Program (MESP) as its 529 plan. This savings plan is designed to encourage saving for future higher education costs by allowing contributions to grow tax-free. The money investors take out later from the plans is free from federal taxes as long as it is used to pay for qualified higher education expenses.

While other states and the District of Columbia offer at least one 529 College Savings Plan similar to the Michigan Education Savings Plan, only MESP offers a Michigan income tax deduction for Michigan residents. Although this can be purchased directly from the plan administrator, industry estimates show that as many as three out of four investors purchase their plan with the help of an investment professional, such as a financial advisor or broker.

“Regardless of how the plan is purchased, investors should have a basic understanding of the plan’s benefits, costs and tax implications,” Watters said. To help investors select the most appropriate college savings plan, OFIS is suggesting four key questions investors should ask their financial professional before investing in a college savings plan:

1. What are the plan’s tax implications? Tax treatment of college savings plan contributions, earnings and withdrawals varies from one state to another. Michigan allows residents who participate in the MESP to claim a state income tax deduction on contributions up to a limit. In addition, the MESP provides residents with a state tax break on money taken out of 529 plans to pay qualified college expenses. Make sure you understand the tax treatment of contributions to, and earnings distributions from, both in-state and out-of-state 529 plans.

2. What are the plan’s expenses? All college savings plans have associated costs, which can affect your investment return. Plans sold by financial professionals often cost more than plans purchased directly from the state. These extra costs generally stem from sales loads or other fees associated with share classes, annual distribution fees, including fees used to compensate the financial professional. You are enti-

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subsequently died on Feb. 27.

Terrence Howard signature Jeep Commander to be auctioned off on eBay

Academy Award-nominated actor Terrence Howard and Chrysler 300 lead designer Ralph Gilles unveiled a customized 2006 Jeep Commander on Feb. 25 on the red carpet at the 37th NAACP Image Awards.

As title sponsor of the Image Awards, DaimlerChrysler brought the two together for the one-of-a-kind vehicle collaboration as part of “My Cus-



MEMBERS OF the NACWC include (front row) Margaret Cooper, president; Carol Early, national executive secretary; and Peggy Faulk Myles, national supervisor of youth. In back row (from left) are Dr. Marie Wright Tolliver, national 1st vice president; Ms. Brown, PR; and Paulette Zozier, state president of the Michigan association. — Andrea Muhammad photo

and consistent way.”

First National Vice President Dr. Marie Wright Tolliver, a native of Saginaw, views the NACWC as one of the best proponents to help the family. Like Cooper, she was introduced to the organization at a young age, but it was her mother, who was a charter member, who was responsible for that introduction.

“My mother got me involved. I went to a couple of meetings...now I just love it,” she said. “It’s been the wind beneath my wings, and I encourage other

young ladies to join our ranks because I know what it’s done for me.”

One of the things she enjoys about the organization is its diversity.

“We have people from all walks of life and religions, and we all come together for the common goal of lifting as we climb, so it’s not like a seniority or fraternity,” she said.

To acquire additional information on the NACWC’s meeting in August at the Detroit Marriott Hotel, visit the website, <http://www.nacwc.org/intro.htm>.

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tled to a complete list of the costs associated with the plans. Be sure to ask for it.

3. How are financial professionals compensated for these plans? Ask whether the advisor or broker receives a commission from any of the plans he or she is recommending.

4. Does an out-of-state plan’s performance or costs outweigh tax benefits of a home state plan? No two plans are exactly alike, and in some cases, it might make sense to consider an out-of-state plan. Make sure you look at all aspects of both in-state and out-of-state plans before investing.

Politics

social well-being of the community,” said Michigan Chronicle Publisher Sam Logan. “The series’ overall goal is to provoke thought and generate new ideas in various sectors that will continue to push our community forward.”

Logan also said the four-part series is part of a major diversification and growth strategy for the Chronicle.

“As a voice in the community, we recognize the necessity to change with a diverse and growing marketplace,” he said. “To do so, we have launched a strategic initiative to position us as a true multimedia resource.

Young Jr.

ing of the guard.

“People are becoming more aware in understanding what their family left behind,” Young said. “They are starting to move forward, we are really understanding the role of a young person. We are the next generation and there is a movement that has transcended in all respects.

“What I plan on doing is making taxpayers’ burdens easier. I want to give back to the taxpayers and I want to move more businesses here to this great state to do business, especially in Detroit.”

While many may compare Young Jr.’s leadership style to

“Before selecting any plan recommended by a financial professional, it is always wise to do your own research to double-check this advice,” Watters said.

For more information about college savings plans, visit the OFIS website at www.michigan.gov/ofis to view a brochure put together by NASAA, along with the College Savings Plan Network and the Investment Company Institute called “A Guide to Understanding College Savings Plans.”

For more information regarding the State of Michigan’s MESP 529 plan, please visit <http://www.misaves.com>.

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This includes the diversification of media properties, a more aggressive Web strategy, the marketing of archives, and hosting of forums and seminars, among other initiatives.”

The other “Pancakes and Politics” breakfast forums are scheduled for April, May and June. Individual tickets can be purchased for \$50 per forum, which includes a six-month Michigan Chronicle subscription. Sponsorships are also available.

For more information, or to become a sponsor, call LaVonne Trent at (313) 862-0492.

that of his father, he said those shoes that cannot be filled.

“There will never be another Coleman Alexander Young,” he said. “I am so humbly honored to be in the position that I am in. Everything we are going through, we are the product of the legacy he left behind. I want to continue to build on his accomplishments by making sure people know they are (cared about). I want them to know that the government cares and we will do all that we can to accommodate them.”

The Primary Election will be held in August and the General Election in November.

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tom Style,” a DaimlerChrysler and NAACP initiative to increase diversity in the field of automotive design.

The Howard-designed Jeep

Commander, which features his signature on exterior door plaques and headrest embroidery, will be donated to the College for Creative Studies (CCS) in Detroit. The personalized vehicle will then be auctioned off on eBay March 3-12 (www.eBay.com, item number 4616180090) through Giving



Terrence Howard

Works, the Internet auction site’s charity listings supporting non-profit organizations.

The proceeds from the auction will create a minority automotive design scholarship fund at CCS in the name of the NAACP and DaimlerChrysler.

Additionally, DaimlerChrysler and the NAACP will collaborate to identify a school offering the study of motion pictures arts and sciences to establish a scholarship fund with a contribution that matches the final sale price of the vehicle on eBay. Similar to the CCS scholarship, the matched contribution will be used to benefit a minority student in their study of the arts.