

Author inspired honest talks on race

Brave Atticus Finch is such a towering cultural figure, it's easy to forget that he lost. Spoiler alert for the handful of adults who have not yet read the Harper Lee classic, "To Kill a Mockingbird," or the teens who have not yet gotten to it: The all-white jury convicts Tom, the



Myron B. Pitts

Lee, for whom the 1960 "Mockingbird" was for decades her only major novel, died on Friday. She was 89.

She left having made a difference. Her vivid portrayal of the events in fictional Maycomb, Alabama, gave millions of schoolkids a chance to have an honest conversation about race in America. For many, it may have been their first. For some, sadly, it may have been their last.



We won't continue to make big strides on race relations until we have more talks like the ones "Mockingbird" inspired.

I don't know that I can add much to the accolades being showered on Lee this weekend.

What I can suggest is to give her surprise novel "Go Set A Watchman" released last year a chance. Questions will always remain whether the infirm Lee ever really wanted the book released. But it's worth reading.

As you've heard, Finch has aged and, to his daughter Jean Louise's (Scout) disappointment, is not a crusader anymore. He is a community pillar, and we come to see what that costs him; he is a man clinging to the old order in his small town, a town staunchly opposed to the outside forces of desegregation.

See PITTS, Page 4B

Political parties' wishes ahead of civic good

RALEIGH — I've long thought both major political parties in North Carolina and the country are institutionally disinterested in the civic good.

Democrat or Republican, our elected leaders routinely put their political parties' wishes ahead of those of many of the people of North Carolina. They operate as Democrats or Republicans first, North Carolinians second.



Capitol Affairs

Need examples? Take a look at what happened over the past several weeks with the state's congressional elections.

At the legislature, lawmakers dramatically revised the congressional districts and scheduled new elections following a federal court ruling that the districts drawn in 2011 violated the rights of black voters.

Do the leaders of the legislature's Republican majority that drew the 2011 maps have any animosity to black people? Most do not, I think. They were trying to serve the demands of their national masters who wanted a Republican majority in Congress.

So in 2011 they gerrymandered See CAPITOL AFFAIRS, Page 4B

FAYETTEVILLE CITY COUNCIL

Development, safety top goals

Officials wrapped up a planning retreat with themes of recruiting businesses and reducing red tape for builders.

By Andrew Barksdale Staff writer

Economic development and public safety once again emerged as top priorities for the Fayetteville City Council this year, followed by renewed efforts to improve the city's appearance.

The council members and mayor wrapped up their two-day strategic planning retreat Saturday in Fayetteville with familiar themes of recruiting new businesses, reducing red tape for builders and redeveloping older corridors.

With the number of crimes con-

tinuing to drop, the council members are broadening their public safety goals this year. They said they would like to expand the red-light cameras, see a fully staffed police force, build a new fire station on Hope Mills Road and crack down on neighborhood speeding.

Rounding out the top five policy goals established Saturday were better streets, sidewalks and park maintenance — issues lumped under

the category of infrastructure maintenance — and a more collaborative relationship with the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education.

They said a joint retreat with the county commissioners was needed to help resolve recent conflicts over the sales tax agreement and discuss mutual concerns, such as See CITY COUNCIL, Page 6B

Black history knowledge pays off



Photos by Michelle Bir

Holly Johnson, Kaleb Allen, Ashanti Moore and Nyla Williams compete at the Black History Quiz Bowl at Cross Creek Mall on Saturday. Below, Joe McGee stands with winners Kendall Lowe, Aja Bullock and Holly. For a slideshow and video, go to fayobserver.com.

Winners of the Quiz Bowl received \$700

By Rodger Mullen Staff writer

No doubt, they had done their homework. That was apparent by the speed at which participants answered the questions in the 13th annual Black History 4Ever Quiz Bowl.

Often, before the judges had even finished the questions, the contestants were ready with an answer:

Question: "Nobel Peace Prize winner, co-founder of ..."

Answer: "Martin Luther King Jr."

Question: "Professional tennis player who ..."

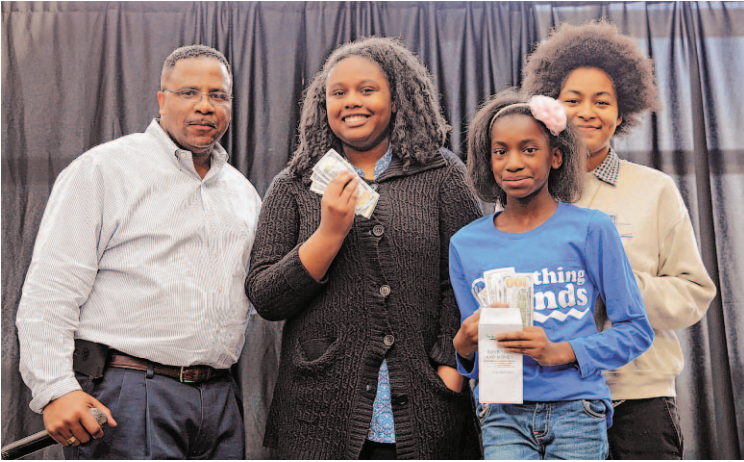
Answer: "Serena Williams."

Question: "An American calypso singer ..."

Answer: "Harry Belafonte."

The quiz bowl was held Saturday in the Cross Creek Mall food court. About 20 young people competed in three age categories. The event was followed by a "Ride 2 Freedom" vehicle convoy that traveled from the mall to the Airborne and Special Operations Museum.

See QUIZ BOWL, Page 6B



Staff photo by Raul R. Rubiera

'We Are Here Tour 2016'

Jason Aldean performs at the Crown Coliseum on Saturday. For a slideshow, go to fayobserver.com.

MEET LILLIAN WILSON

Volunteer leaves mark on staff and guests

By Alicia Banks Staff writer

Lillian Wilson looked at the folded towels lining the shelves in the linen closet at the Stanton Hospitality House.

The Gray's Creek resident can't reach the top shelf anymore. For one thing, she's a little under 5 feet tall. And, at 78, they won't let her use the ladder anymore.

"This linen room, it's still my prize," she said defiantly.

Wilson's attitude — feistiness and genuine care — fuels her shifts from Friday afternoon to Monday morning at the place where families can stay in a homelike atmosphere while loved ones are getting care at Cape Fear Valley Medical Center and other area hospitals.

To her guests, she's "Ms. Lillian." To the house's staff and Martha Bock, the nonprofit See MEET, Page 4B



This is the first weekly profile, to run each Sunday, of a community member who is doing something noteworthy or interesting. Let us know about your friends, family or neighbors who you believe should be considered by sending an email to news@fayobserver.com with "Meet" in the subject line.