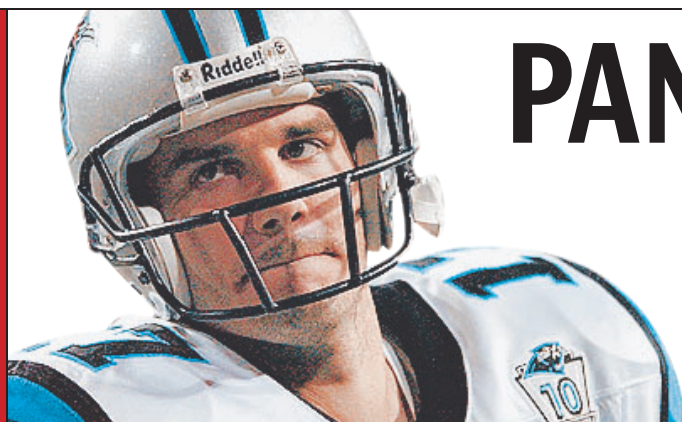




IN ARTS & BOOKS

## How HIP HOP has changed our culture

GRANDMASTER FLASH



# PANTHERS' MAGIC RUNS OUT

Loss to Falcons makes playoffs a long(er) shot  
COMPLETE COVERAGE IN SPORTS

# The Charlotte Observer

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2004

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### ALLEGRO BOUND FOR WASHINGTON



DAN HALE — STAFF PHOTO

Allegro member Angel Paez, 6, who is visually impaired, performs "Feliz Navidad" at Sardis Presbyterian with teaching assistant Meredith Helms.

## Can we dance at your place, Mr. President?

*Kids with disabilities to show White House their abilities*

BY JERI FISCHER KRENTZ  
Staff Writer

When Air Force One touched down in Charlotte earlier this year, 9-year-old Olivia Navarro was among the VIPs waiting.

Olivia rolled her pink wheelchair onto the tarmac. She wore a flowered skirt, pink satin blouse and a sash that said "Allegro." As President Bush worked his way through the crowd, he stopped, bent down and gave her a kiss on the forehead.

What is Allegro? he asked.

Olivia's mother explained. It provides movement education for children with disabilities. Olivia is the group's ambassador.

Olivia looked at the president with big brown eyes and smiled. Can me and my Allegro friends come and dance at your house? she asked.

I would love for that to happen, the president said. On Tuesday, it will.

SEE ALLEGRO | 4A

### INSIDE THE OBSERVER

2A | Features editor discusses value of storytelling.

### My Wish for the Holidays

6 DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS

## Holiday Card Winners

The Observer received more than 400 cards from children expressing their wish for the holidays in our third annual Holiday Card Contest. We will publish one card each day on the front page through Christmas Day. There were so many great cards that we also will publish more in Saturday's Observer.



AGES 8-11 | Annie Whitney, 8, calls her winning card a collage and created it with colored paper, marker, silver string and glue. She is the daughter of Frank and Catherine Whitney of Charlotte.



### UNDERAGE DRINKING AND DRIVING

# GUILTY? YES. PUNISHED? NO.



TODD SUMLIN — STAFF PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

They're under 21. They're not supposed to drink alcohol at all. Then they get behind a wheel.

Each year in North Carolina, about 4,000 youths who get caught drinking and driving don't get punished by the courts.

And some of the best odds for getting off are in Mecklenburg County.

## Young drinkers often avoid penalties

BY LIZ CHANDLER  
AND LISA HAMMERSLY MUNN  
Staff Writers

Nearly six in 10 young people charged with drinking and driving in Mecklenburg County aren't punished in court.

That's the second lowest punishment rate in North Carolina.

Young drivers walk away when prosecutors dismiss their cases or judges give them a break — even when they plead guilty.

They are society's highest-risk drivers, ages 16 to 20, with little experience behind the wheel. Crashes fueled by alcohol and speed are their No. 1 killers.

State law bars them from drinking at all. Yet many, like 18-year-old Joey Houck, dodge penalties that would have taken away their driver's license.

Sometimes the consequences are fatal.

Houck was weaving on Charlotte's Independence Boulevard when police stopped him. He admitted downing two rum drinks, police said. He pleaded guilty to the state's tough underage drinking-and-driving law.

But in January 2003, a judge followed standard practice in Mecklenburg courts: He gave the Waxhaw youth a break that withheld punishment and allowed him to keep his license.

Six months later, Houck drank and drove again. This time, he was drunk and speeding near the airport when his pickup hit a culvert, flew and slid 68 feet, according to police and medical reports.

SEE DRINKING | 14A



Joey Houck (left) and Derrick Keith, killed last year, "were great young men. They would have taken the world by storm," Keith's mother says.

### AN OVERLOOKED TOLL IN U.S.

# Pregnancy can be deadly proposition

*Killings are frequent but hard to quantify; they're poorly tracked*

BY DONNA ST. GEORGE  
Washington Post

Their killings produced local headlines, then faded, each an apparent aberration in the community where it happened.

Tara Chambers, 29, was gunned down on a June morning inside her Concord home.

Rebecca Johnson, 16, was shot in the chest as she sat in a pickup truck in Oklahoma. Ana Diaz, 28, was killed in a parking lot in Reston, Va., as she stopped to get a friend on their way to work.

They all were pregnant, with futures that seemed sure to unfold over many years. Chambers was a nurse's assistant who planned to

name her daughter T'Kaiya. Diaz had just bought a house. Johnson was a high school cheerleader.

A yearlong examination by The Washington Post of death-record data across the country documents the killings of 1,367 pregnant women and new mothers since 1990. This is only part of the national toll, because there's no reliable system to track such cases.

SEE SLAYINGS | 9A

### Weather

SNOW?: High: 49. Low: 16. Slight chance for rain, possibly snow. Turning windy. Full forecast, 8B

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>KNIGHT RIDDER<

INFORMATION FOR LIFE