Among the best in high school football

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Columbia's new black principal
(See page 12)

Baltimore Afro-American
WE ARE NOW IN OUR 88TH YEAR

AFRO's IYC Contest
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Fireman's family recalls holiday plans

(see column 5)

Child survives 10 story fall

(See column 3)

Woodlawn executive's murder still a 'mystery'

The unsolved Nov. 25 homicide of a 52-year-old Woodlawn executive and former long-time social security employee who was found shot in the head and found lying near his car in the roadway on Belmont Ave., is now being called a "mystery" by Baltimore County police.

James Edward Webster, of the 6700 block Kincheloe Ave., was found by a passing motorist lying in the southbound lane between the Ramada Inn and the Holiday Inn around 4:30 a.m. He had been shot in the head.

Police have no leads in the murder and report, "We have not been able to rule out robbery. However, police could not say how much money the victim had in his pockets.

Webster was employed as a systems analyst with the Social Security Administration Woodlawn. His body was face up and positioned in front of his light green 1978 two door Chevrolet Monza. Police report he had been dead less than an hour and his car key was still in the ignition.

The AFRO has learned Webster was seen around 1 a.m. in Murray's Den, a club he would occasionally visit on Maryland Avenue.

Police report they are now interviewing the victim's co-workers and friends. Webster lived with his wife, Mrs. Judith Webster in Baltimore County and was found dead two miles from his home.

James Edward Webster

When police were asked if he left home alone, Lt. Lee Peters told the AFRO, "As far as we can determine he left alone. His wife was out of town for the holiday (Thanksgiving)."

Police report Webster was also seen with a relative earlier the same night he was found dead. Police are asking anyone who may have been in the area that morning who remembers seeing the victim, his vehicle or any other vehicle to call homicide unit, 494-2186.

Child survives

A 3-year-old child survived a ten-story fall from an apartment window in West Baltimore Thursday, Dec. 13.

The child identified as Donte Lavan Sampson, is listed in good condition at University Hospital, where he was rushed by ambulance following the near-fatal fall.

According to police reports, Donte had been left with two younger children, Daron and Damon Sampson, in a tenth-floor apartment of the George Murphy Homes, located in the 700 block Lexington St. by his mother, who had gone to receive the family's food stamps.

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'My father lived a good life'

IN HAPPIER DAYS — Rodney Byrd, a six-year veteran of the Baltimore City Fire Department, who was found dead in his Park Avenue apartment, is shown with his wife, Mrs. Clarestine Byrd and sons Rodney Jr., left and Gleanard Byrd.

AFRO photo by Mark Gail

BATTLE WEARY? — At least one Christmas shopper seemed ready to go home Wednesday afternoon. Balmy weather brought people out to buy gifts and decorations, but the Christmas season this year is just not what it used to be.

What's happening to Christmas spirit?

By James M. Abraham
AFRO Staff Writers

Santa Claus is coming to town soon, but, according to many shoppers and merchants in the Baltimore area, few people are aware of the old saint's impending visit. There appears to be a short supply of Christmas spirit about, and many blame it on the spiralling prices and general lack of money.

"I'm doing my shopping now, before prices go up any higher," said Hazel Williams, of the 2000 block of Baltimore St. But it still seems like everything is going up, especially clothes."

Ms. Williams added that she doesn't have the Christmas spirit, "but Ill get it on the 24th!" When asked what the Christmas spirit was, she laughed and said, "It's being happy and jolly and spending a lot of money."

Ms. Williams was standing on the corner of Park Avenue and Lexington Street in the Lexington Mall. Around her, crowds of shoppers bustled, but, according to Bill Howard, a local merchant, people were buying less.

"Our sales are down about ten per cent," he said, standing in front of his shoe store, located in the mall. "Although we expect the usual last-minute rush of shoppers, I doubt if that'll make up for what we have lost."

Howard added that this was his third year at his present location, and that this is the slowest Christmas buying season he's seen.

Debbie Duckett, a Philadelphia native, also was downtown in Lexington Mall doing some Christmas shopping.

"I plan on spending about $350 for my parents and my eight brothers," she said. She stated that she didn't mind spending the money, because, "she wants them to have something."

Does she have the Christmas spirit? "Well," she said. "As I get older I seem to lose it more and more." She defines the Christmas spirit as "being close to the ones you love."

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Sons say Byrd was good father

Pam Widgeon
AFRO Staff Writer

Rodney Byrd was a father who believed in spending time with his sons. He taught them how to play tennis, chess swiming, and would often take them shopping.

He and his wife had been separated three months, but that never stopped Mr. Byrdfrom seeing his two sons. Eight days ago, Mr, Byrdand his sons, Glenard and Rodney Jr., went shopping. "He bought us bracelets and had our names engraved on them. My father lived a good life," said 12-year-old Glenard.

Around 8:25 a.m. Dec. 9, Mr. Byrdwas found ly?ng on a bed, wrapped in a blanket in his Park Avenue apartment. He had been shot twice in the head. His hands and feet were bound by some type of wire.

Mr. Byrd was employed with the Baltimore City Fire Department for six years as a firefighter. When his co-workers heard about his death, they were hbocked He worked at Truck ComPany at McCulloh and McMechen Sts. was described as a 'well-liked guy who loved to play tennis."

Police report they are still investigating the case and no arrest had been made at AFRO presstime.

Ms. Virginia Henry, a friend of the deceased told police she became concerned when she did not hear from Mr Byrd Friday night and he did not report for work. After repeatedly knocking on his door, Ms. Henry flagged down a patrol car near his apartment. The officer obtained apass key from the apartment manager and entered the apartment.

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Reach out and touch someone now

The AFRO-AMERICAN Newspapers Mrs. Santa has exactly 10 more days to raise $10,967 to meet her goal of $20,000.

And, if everybody gives just a little bit, those Baltimore families in need will be helped. The Mrs. Santa program is non-profit manned by volunteers and all expense of raising funds including postage and salaries of employees are assumed by the AFRO.

Many clubs, organizations and individuals have responded to our urgent pleas knowing in their hearts that many families are going hungry due to circumstances beyond their control.

Top orchids for this week go to the Employee Community Fund at General Electric, Appliance Park-East in Columbia, Md. for their contribution of $1,050.

The fund was established in 1971 and is made up by voluntary contributions from employees. The fund is managed by a Board of Administration composed of Louis Gentile, Ms. Margaret Rowlett, Ms. Verna Williamson, Tom Kaufman from the Range Operation; Everett Harless from the Relations and Utilities Operation and Ms. Iva Townsend from the Warehouse.

Each year board members vote on contributions to various charitable organizations and the $1,050 contribution to Mrs. Santa was donated so that others less

(Continued on page 2)

AFRO photo by Mark Gail

THE LARGEST DONATION — The Employee Community Fund at General Electric Appliance Park-East in Columbia, Md. gave the AFRO's Mrs. Santa $1,050 this week. Shown here, Mrs. Iva Townsend, left; Mrs. Santa, center and Mrs. Margaret Rowlett.