RICHMOND METRO

Universal is 12th in nation in sales

By Sharon E. Wilkerson
AFRO Staff Writer

"Ford is the number one truck seller in the country, in the world," said Harry Harris, vice president of Universal Ford, 1012 W. Broad St.

Universal Ford is ranked 12th nationwide among black auto dealerships, according to Black Enterprise, a magazine which reviews the progress of black-owned businesses each year. Universal Ford holds its rank in the magazine's category of Top 100 black-owned auto dealerships.

The company has climbed in sales from $23.9 million in 1986 to a staggering $32.9 million in 1987.

Harris said he attributes Universal Ford's increase in sales "to good, professional people and teamwork." Without good people, you cannot run a business."

Willie L. "Bill" Turner, president and owner of Universal Ford, became owner of the company, which is the oldest Ford franchise in Richmond, in August 1986. Turner hired Harris in May 1987.

Both Turner and Harris came to Universal with sales backgrounds from Sam Johnson's Lincoln-Mercury in Charlotte, N.C. "What we have had to learn is different marketing schemes, techniques, that we have to use on this type of clientele versus the luxury car buyer," said Harris. "We have had to learn completely how to merchandise pick-up trucks."

Attracting customers to its downtown location has been challenging for Universal Ford. But "there is still a place for downtown dealers," said Turner in a 1986 interview with The Richmond News Leader.

"To really be more aggressive in going after the Richmond market" is a plan for maintaining Universal's sales prosperity, said Harris. Harris is responsible for coordinating Universal's advertising campaigns. One of the company's major advertising themes is "We're not resting on our reputation: We're building one."

"One of the big things that we have been concentrating on, since we took over, is to turn around that negative image that existed prior to us coming here," said Harris. "When a company tends to fall from grace as Universal had, you have that image in the public that it's the same old guys.

"We've continuously assaulted that stigma. It's a continuing job. We're making progress on it, but we want the Richmond public to know that there are new people on board, a new attitude on board," Harris said.

Returning some of the company's wealth to the community is one of Harris' goals. "One of the things that I would like to do is to return some of the prosperity to the community."

Harris said also "to show our young black people that it's not impossible to operate a big business and be successful" is another of his objectives.

Last January, the Richmond Urban League coordinated "New Me," a program for black youth ages 13-18 designed to give them hands-on experience in business entrepreneurship.

Universal Ford participates regularly in the program, which has the theme, "Learning How to Be the Employer Rather than the Employee," said Alfred B. Delaney, II, co-chairman of the "New Me" Committee.

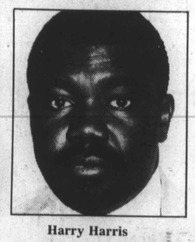
"There are so few of us that operate big businesses. It's something they need to see, to know that it can be done," said Harris.

Another goal is to increase the number of women involved in sales and management, commented Turner.

Customer satisfaction is the focus of Universal's business philosophy. "If a customer has a complaint with Universal, they are welcome to come directly to Bill Turner shortly after becoming president of Universal. "I am able to provide a service to customers without getting approval from a boss somewhere else.

"I have been a car customer before, and I know how a customer feels when he has a problem with an expensive car. It's rewarding to me to provide that service."

Willie L. Turner



Harry Harris

Photo by Williams' Photography

GRIEVANCES — NAACP President, Rev. Tyler C. Millner (left), and Crusade for Voters Second Vice President, E. Martin Jewell (far right) brought before the press a list of "adverse" budgetary items including the $10 per semester instructional fee and the elimination of Henderson Alternative High School, which was retracted by the Board. Members of the organizations stood behind Millner and Jewell.

The Glory of The Page

A film series related to the Virginia Museum's current exhibition, "The Glory of the Page," will continue Sunday, July 3, with a screening of "The Name of the Rose," a 1986 movie starring Sean Connery and F. Murray Abraham.

All films in the series are screened on Sunday evenings at 7 in the museum's auditorium. Admission to each is $1, but the screenings are free to museum members and students with valid ID cards.

Only July 10, the museum will screen "The Adventures of Robin Hood," a black-and-white swashbuckler directed by Michael Curtiz and William Deighley and starring Errol Flynn, Olivia de Haviland and Basil Rathbone.

The series will conclude July 17 with "Ivanhoe," starring Elizabeth Taylor, John Fontaine and Robert Taylor.

Fort Lee gives students summer jobs

By THERESA R. ROBINSON

FORT LEE — The college semester is out, and once again, students are concerned about gaining work experience in their specific fields of study.

Fortunately, this summer, the Virginia College Work-Study Program, also known as the Virginia Program, is providing such job opportunities at Fort Lee for 18 college students from Virginia State University and Virginia Union.

VSU and Virginia Union are two out of 20 schools in Virginia that participate each summer. The central station for the program is located at VSU.

"Currently, there are 17 students from VSU and one student from Virginia Union," explained Doug Camp, associate director of the program and director of the Job Location and Development at VSU. "Additional students will be joining the program later this month."

Whether students qualify depends on their ability to show educational financial need. "This year, VSU had sufficient money to push the program and provide federal college work-study grants for some students who showed financial need," Sheila Jones, VSU's college work-study coordinator said. "Sometimes the university, like various other schools, lacks the funds to provide students with summer employment."

By making use of such programs, Virginia colleges and universities can assure employment for perspective students using federal college work-study funds.

"The Virginia Program assists various organizations, such as Fort Lee, with summer employment," explained Verla Martin personnel staffing specialist at the installation's Civilian Personnel Office.

"Our office distributes disposition forms and Organizational Student Request Forms to all organizations on post informing them of the program. We tell them when it will begin and that they are responsible for paying 33 percent of the student's grant. If the organizations have the money and need to fill a certain position, they are urged to complete and return the form by a specific date," she continued.

"Once the forms have been received, we contact Mr. Camp, and give him a list of all positions that need to be filled," Martin further commented.

If students qualify, they have the opportunity to work in the available positions.

"Students who receive financial aid will be notified and those interested will complete an Application and Placement Form. Then, the students and I sit down, individually, and try to decide what department will give them the best experience to pursue a career in their major," Camp said.

"Their job titles range from clerk typist, voucher examiner, military pay clerk, accounting technician and recreation aid to journalist," he continued.

A major advantage of the program is that it saves the Army money, since it only has to pay a small portion of the student's wages, according to Martin.

"The program gives me a chance to earn experience in my field," said Lori McKenzie, a participant working in the Training Audio Visual Support Center.

"Because my major is Business Administration, I need hands-on experience in activities such as typing, filing and accounting procedures," she said.

"However, what I gain the most from this program is experience in dealing with people on the job. The pay isn't the highest but I am grateful for the opportunity to learn government work procedures. It is very hard to find employment in private organizations, because they look to hire people who already have work experience and degrees. The program gives me a chance to prove myself in the working atmosphere and the confidence to work at future job sites," she said.

"Lori has been a big help. She is energetic, responsible and reliable for clerical support. She is very devoted to her work and is always eager to learn something new," said Lori's immediate supervisor, Peggy Boone.

Any interested Virginia college student, whose school is a participant in the Virginia College-Work-Study Program, should contact his or her school's financial aid office or Doug Camp at 520-6519. VSU students can also contact Sheila Jones at 520-6616.

COLLEGE WORK STUDY — Participants in the Virginia College Work-Study Program are (L to R): Bridget Monroe, Karen Toni, Kelvin Holland, Barbette Bonner, Charles Salley, Tomika Johnson, Lanuel Smith, Lori McKenzie, Doris Burton and Sybil Lane. Not pictured are: Arnita Bonner, Bridget Robinson, Toni Crawford, Sheila Landford, Sheila Samples, Rashon sykes, Lisa Temple and Theresa Robinson.

State grants VUU funds for proposal

Virginia Union University's President, Dr. S. Dallas Simmons recently received notification of the Commonwealth of Virginia's Division of Energy intent to fund an energy conservation measure project proposed by Virginia Union University upon the recommendation of its Institutional Conservation Program (ICP) staff.

The ICP grant plan, titled the Cycle X Energy Conservation Measure (ECM), was set up by the Division of Energy with the purpose of developing ways to save energy. The notification from Vernon W. Banks, grants program supervisor with the Commonwealth of Virginia's Division of Energy states that the ICP proposes to fund Union's Heating Plant project directly with funds for Virginia Union project totals $633,053.

Virginia Union's proposal, an impressive 20 page document, was the quantitative and qualitative work of Myron A. Holland, asssistant to the vice president for University Services and Samuel T. Rhoades, assistant to the president for Sponsored Programs.

Holland says, "We have received the grant on a 80:20 matching basis. This means that the University applied for a particular dollar amount and was accepted for a hardship total $633,053. The funds will be used for renovating the heating plant and for high temperature boilers."

After thorough review by the ICP staff of Virginia Union's Cycle X ECM grant application, a recommendation was made that Virginia Union receive ECM funding. The application was then forwarded to the U.S. Department of Energy for review and approval. The actual contract for the project is expected to be issued this month.

"There are two portions of the grant," explained Holland. "The first portion relates to the technical analyst portion with respect to the energy saving needs being identified. Secondly, there is the actual contractual portion, the implementation of the recommendations from the technical analyst."

The Commonwealth's Energy Division praised the proposal submission and commended Dr. Simmons and his staff for the hard work that was put into completing the grant application.

Rhoades and Holland will be attending the mandatory Cycle X Grants Management Workshops which will begin this month.

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