

Bird flu sparking action

Mastering math

By Dennis M. Byron Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

ATLANTA (NNPA) - When the word got around that the popular fast food chain, Kentucky Fried Chicken, now has the face of their founder, Colonel Harland Sanders, on a small sticker that downplays any scares regarding the bird flu (avian influenza) infecting their poultry, eyebrows were raised and questions were asked and questions were asked regarding how serious this virus is.

Already seeing plummeting profits, especially in Asia where a strong strain of the virus has spread, businesses like KFC are definitely taking precautions to ensure patrons that they can still enjoy poultry, while other chains including Chick-Fil-A are watching the virus closely.

Although the KFC seal is a preventive campaign informing customers that their chicken is "rigorously inspected, thoroughly cooked, quality assured," buyers of fast food chicken will not be the only ones who need some sort of reassurance. The masses want health institutions like the Center for Dis-

ease Control and respected doctors to assure that they can still have chicken legs, thighs and breasts on their plates.

Hollywood is already jumping on the phenomenon with a movie based on the bird flu that experts are trying desperately to downplay, calling it, well, Hollywood. The ABC television network aired their made-for-television feature, "Fatal Contact: Bird Flu in America," on May 9.

Based on what they claim is extensive research regarding the bird-flu, the film is about an American businessman in Hong Kong being infected by a contaminated factory worker and that eventually launches a global epidemic. Certainly, this will not sit well with viewers who will demand answers from experts regarding the validity of "Fatal."

The *Atlanta Voice* recently interviewed the interim president of the Morehouse School of Medicine and 16th U.S. Surgeon General, world-renown Dr. David Satcher, to get answers regarding the bird flu especially concerning African-

Americans.

Q: What should be the major worry regarding the bird flu?

A: When it comes to epidemics, we all worry together. Clearly, African-Americans who are low-income and who are outside of the healthcare system are most likely to experience the most severe impact because they're more likely to get the care later. In the sense that African-Americans are more likely to be uninsured and underinsured, I think African-Americans should be worried about a pandemic.

Q: Should there be major concern for eating chicken?

A: To date, there is no evidence that chicken consumption is a major factor in the spread of avian flu. Most people who get it from chickens get it because they live within the same environment or environs as the chickens. There are places in Asia where people keep chickens in their homes — they eat with the chickens, sleep with the chickens — and that's where we have seen the spread of the Avian flu virus to humans. The only way we're going to have a pan-

demic is if the virus mutates and can spread from human to human. We're not going to have a pandemic if the virus spreads from chicken to human; it's when it spreads from human to human that we're more likely to have a pandemic.

Q: What is the best way to prepare for the bird flu?

A.: It's important to support first responders and the people who are going to be on the front line. People in the healthcare professions — hospital workers, medical caregivers, firemen, policemen and others — are going to need to be trained and prepared; and if a vaccine is available, that group should get it first, along with people who are vulnerable because of their health.

We all have a role to play in terms of educating ourselves and preparing for a disaster like having adequate water available and food and other things.

Every person should inform himself or herself as to what he or she can do to be prepared for a pandemic or any disaster.

Dennis M. Byron Jr. writes for the *Atlanta Voice*.

AME defrocks pastor in abuse case

By Gene C. Johnson Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) - After being accused of sexual advances toward an underage member of his congregation, Rev. Sylvester Laudermill Jr. has been permanently removed as senior pastor of Ward AME Church.

An attorney representing the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Joseph Stanley Sanders, said Laudermill has been "in effect, defrocked" following a minor's complaint about the minister's alleged improper behavior during "late February or early March" of this year.

Neither Laudermill nor his attorney, Leonard Levine, returned phone calls seeking comment.

Sanders, who refused to directly discuss the gender of the minor or the details of the alleged sexual attack, may have inadvertently revealed the child's gender in an interview. The alleged victim first reported the incident to "his" parents, who then went to the church's presiding elder, the Rev. Norman Copeland, Sanders said.

Copeland, in turn, lodged a complaint with Bishop John R. Bryant, presiding prelate of the AME Church's

Fifth Episcopal District, which includes California and Missouri. A hearing was held April 27 in Pasadena by the AME Church's Ministerial Efficiency Committee, which consists of five pastors from different AME churches in California "to take testimony from the accused and from witnesses," Sanders said.

The 2004 edition of the "Doctrine and Discipline of African Methodist Episcopal Church," on page 304, states:

"If the accused has been convicted of a crime or complaint has been sustained for child sexual abuse, rape or

sexual assault, the bishop must demand the immediate and permanent surrender of the accused pastor's ministerial responsibilities and credentials."

Sanders said Laudermill faces no punitive or criminal charges because of the Ministerial Efficiency Committee's decision.

After being announced at a Sunday church service as well as via "word of mouth," a meeting was held recently at Ward AME. Bryant then informed the church's parishioners there that Laudermill was no longer their pastor.

"A new pastor should be

in place by June 1," Sanders said.

Laudermill, a 1976 Manual Arts High graduate, in March was placed on leave from his post as senior pastor pending, in what was described at the time as an undisclosed "church proceeding." Retired minister the Rev. Cecil "Chip" Murray was seated as interim senior pastor while Laudermill was on leave.

Gene C. Johnson Jr. writes for *Wave Community Newspapers*.

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INGLEWOOD - Twelve-year-old Maya Mason and 11-year-old Miles Hooper, students at the Culture and Language Academy of Success, once shared a frustration with math. "I just didn't get it. I just didn't get math. I'm getting better at it. But I don't like it any more than I used to," admitted Mason, who had suffered through algebra. "I'm less frustrated now. It seems more interesting to me now because of Mathnasium."

"Mathnasium" is an innovative program that purports to bestow a greater understanding and application of math, through a concept of visualizing math through drawings and hearing "the sound of the math," said its creator, Larry Martinek, an ex-Inglewood math teacher.

"A student will say, 'I don't understand this question.' I'll say, 'Read the question out loud to me,'" Martinek said. "About halfway through the second sentence they'll say, 'Oh, that's what it means.' So often when you hear something it makes more sense to you than if you read it off the page. "The program, ultimately, makes sense to them because we don't just give them a bunch of written work to do. We talk them through it. We provide mental images of what's going on. We draw models of how the kind of thinking they should be doing — and all of sudden kids are engaged."

As a result, math is now less confusing than it used to be, said Hooper, who previously had difficulty with fractions and decimals. Mathnasium "kind of cooled me off," he said. "I'm not as frustrated any more. It's much easier. Whenever I needed help, Mathnasium would give me an easier way to find out how to get the answer to a question."

If success can be measured by dollars, Mathnasium LLC's revenue more than quadrupled from about \$600,000 in 2004 to \$2.6 million in 2005. The company now has 90 franchises in the United States and in nine countries around the world after opening for business in April 2002. And success has led the company to build a math center in the building at 100 E. Nutwood Ave. where the academy is located, said Sharroky Hollie, a math teacher at the academy. A move-in date has not been announced. Meanwhile, Hollie said, "We have about 71 kids who are coming to Mathnasium at our corporate center [in Ladera Heights] — mostly from La Tijera Elementary but some from Morningside and Inglewood [high schools]."



Mathnasium students first take a diagnostic test, Martinek explained, before "preparing an individualized notebook of material that matches exactly with the kid. So when they come to us, it's like having a personal trainer — somebody that's doing something that you, specifically, need."

Most Mathnasium students come to the program, on the average, six months to three years behind in their mathematical skills. "Our mission is to teach children math in a way where it makes sense to them," he said. "The need for the service is indisputable. Every time we do any kind of comparisons, internationally or in America, American kids tank. It's an embarrassment."

Gene C. Johnson Jr. writes for the *Wave Newspapers*.

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