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Kidnapped woman freed in N. Ca

Associated Press

MACON, GA. — A Minnesota woman was abducted at gunpoint from a Macon convenience store Tuesday and was forced to drive her rental car to North Carolina, where the gunman fled on foot, authorities said.

Cheryl Swanum, 40, of Hastings, was subjected to a seven-hour ordeal in which she drove the car north on Interstate Hwy.

75 to Atlanta and northeast on I-85 through South Carolina to Burlington, N.C., where the man reportedly jumped out of the vehicle as she slowed down on an exit ramp.

Police searched the area with dogs and a helicopter but didn't find the man.

Detective Lt. Jimmy Barbee of the Macon police said his investigators were working with the FBI to get details but had not been

able to talk to Swanum late Tuesday night.

Barbee said that from what he had gathered from police in Burlington and the FBI, Swanum had driven to Macon from the Atlanta airport for a class she was to present at Macon College when she stopped for directions Tuesday morning near the campus.

When she got back in the car, the man was in the back seat brandishing a pistol and told her

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Minneapolis take officials to task on racism, schools

By David Chanen
Star Tribune Staff Writer

A group of North Side residents told several top Minneapolis and state educators Tuesday that they might need private tutoring involving central-city school issues.

Racism, desegregation, community schools and voucher programs were just a few of the subjects debated at a forum sponsored by the newly created North Community Coalition of Concerned Parents and Community Members and the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership. More than 40 people, ranging from high school students to families, gathered in the auditorium at North Community High School, hoping to ease a growing concern that urban students aren't getting the same quality of education as suburban students.

They patiently listened to a panel of five speakers before lining up at the microphone to pepper them with thoughts and questions. Jeanne Kling, president of the State Board of Education, talked about the efforts on a new desegregation rule that would require districts to devise plans for eliminating any achievement gap between white students and students of color.

"As the rule is written right now, it's unfair. It's just a numbers game," she said.

Bob Miller, director of the Minnesota Office of Desegregation and Integration, showed the group how block grants and other new programs are breaking down boundaries between school districts. State Sen. Larry Pogemiller, DFL-Minneapolis, a longtime education advocate, challenged the audience, saying "the next generation will regret it if we don't move ahead on desegregation issues."

"If I had the answers tonight, I would give them to you," he said. "You have to be afraid of benign neglect."

Most of the questions were addressed to Minneapolis Superintendent Peter Hutchinson.

After stating his philosophy that people have to be open about the means to get results, he presented several ways to eliminate the achievement gap. He said families should be committed to their children's education, communities should have a stake in students' success and parents should be willing to accept school choices and assignments.

This led to the evening's hot-button subject of community schools in the Minneapolis School District, a plan that allows more children to attend school closer to home. Armed with overhead projections, Minneapolis NAACP President Bill Davis used his 10-minute presentation time "to give facts, not nice sentiments and generalities" about the pitfalls of community schools.

Citing information supplied by a School District study, John Shulman of the NAACP said areas with guaranteed-attendance schools were located in the city's wealthier neighborhoods. It would not only worsen the learning gap, but would create increased segregation by poverty and race, he said.

"Why can't guaranteed schools work in the inner city? Too many kids and not enough schools," he said. "People need to talk to their officials."

Hutchinson said community schools will work because parent participation has proved to be a great factor in improving education. In sections of north Minneapolis, kids attend 50 schools, he said.

The panel answered questions for more than an hour, and many seemed frustrated by what they heard. One man wanted specifics about what was going to be done to improve education on the North Side. Matt Little, cochairman of the NAACP education committee, wanted to know the panel's thoughts on Gov. Arne Carlson's voucher proposal to allow low-income families to use subsidies for private or parochial schools.

"If public money is used for private purposes, I would oppose vouchers," Hutchinson said.

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