



PHOTO/JAMES CULLUM

**MIND OVER MATTER:** Alexandria native Derrick Nowlin has a board broken over his back at a martial arts demonstration at the Lee Center, June 4, 2011. Nicknamed "Dragon Chyld," Nowlin is a T.C. Williams graduate and has taught martial arts for 20 years. During the presentation, he also broke cinder blocks and performed push-ups on broken glass without inflicting cuts or bruises on himself.

## City employee convicted of assaulting child

**Recreation center director pled not guilty**

BY DERRICK PERKINS

Longtime city employee Robert Gordon was found guilty Friday of assaulting an 11-year-old boy during a pickup basketball game at the Charles Barrett Recreation Center in April.

"You let a very small child get the best of you," Judge Constance Frogale told Gordon before sentencing him to 12 months of jail — with all but 10 days suspended — and an anger management program.

Though witnesses offered differing versions of the assault, Gordon, the recreation center director, was shooting hoops with five children in the center's gymnasium when he and the victim got into an ar-

gument on April 13. After insulting Gordon and Gordon's deceased father, the child fled to a nearby multipurpose room filled with other children and at least one staff member, according to courtroom testimony.

Though he pled not guilty, Gordon admitted following the child, grabbing and lifting him off of the ground before taking the boy to his office. The 11-year-old later called his family and they, in turn, contacted authorities, according to testimony.

Testifying in Alexandria Juvenile and Domestic Court, the child also accused Gordon of insulting, punching and choking him before his parents arrived at the recreation center. Officer James Young, who arrested Gordon, told the court he saw signs the child had been assaulted when the



PHOTO/APD

Robert Gordon

two spoke later in the day.

"I did see some scratches on his neck," he said. "It appeared as though he'd been choked."

The boy's mother, Symill Willis, said an apologetic Gordon admitted hurting the child when the two met on the day of the incident. He had "flipped," Willis recalled. Meanwhile, her son's neck was swollen and bruised, she said.

"He just kept apologizing,

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## Rust leaves lasting legacy

**Retires after 41 years at Boys and Girls Club**

BY DERRICK PERKINS

Raising a young son and desperate for work, 28-year-old Ron Rust quit college and found a job with the then Alexandria Boys Club. He would remain there for years, becoming a neighborhood institution along the way.

More than four decades af-

ter starting as the North Payne Street club's social recreation director, he was finally ready to leave this year. On Friday, relatives, friends, co-workers and a cadre of men he'd help raise to adulthood gathered at the Dunbar Alexandria-Olympic Boys and Girls Club for something more like a family reunion than Rust's retirement party.

For a living legend, Rust had an inauspicious start at the Boys Club. He recalls coming across the job listing in a newspaper. At the time, Rust didn't plan on picking out a career path, but then he had a family to worry about.

"I wasn't sure what I wanted to do and I just knew I liked helping people, kids in particular. I went on and took the

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PHOTO/DERRICK PERKINS

Friends and family celebrated Ron Rust, left, and his four decades of work at the Boys and Girls Club last week.

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