

# "PROJECT YOUTH" DIRECTOR DID NOT LET BLINDNESS STOP HER EFFORTS

By Muhammad Abdullah

"When I was younger a burglary attempt was made. I was staying with my mom at the time. The burglar was determined to rob the house and I was determined to defend it - this occurred while I was living in Michigan - a struggle resulted and the burglar pulled out a gun and I was raped and shot twice. The burglary attempt left me totally blind."

These words were related to SENTINEL-VOICE in a recent interview with Rena Smith, Executive Director of Project Youth Life Skills Center located at 1201 W. Miller.

Project Youth is a non-profit organization which offers tutorial assistance; substance abuse awareness; GED classes; employment preparation techniques; dance and other cultural classes; computer literacy training; job search skills; networks for ex-offenders and juveniles; interpersonal counseling sessions and a number of other life skills activities.

Smith said that after she became blind she became extremely distraught and as a high school drop out at age 22, she

was not inclined to go back to school.

"I reached the fourth stage of depression and became increasingly suicidal. However, the Lord came to me one day through my son - who at the time was in nursery school - he is 20 years old today."

"I can remember him looking at me and saying 'mama I go to school why don't you go to school too? At that moment it was as if God had spoken. I didn't even have a GED and I told my husband that I was going to enter college."

"I told him that I could pass the entrance exam if I put my mind to it and I believed it. Well, I took the college entrance exam and I passed it even before taking my GED! I later went on and passed my GED."

"I had just about given up on life. God gave me a second lease-on-life and I told him that I would devote my life to helping others."

"I went on to get my bachelor's degree in Social Work and ended up moving to Las Vegas where I earned my Masters Degree in Business Admini-

stration."

"My blindness is immaterial because I have found a purpose. I wanted to help ex-offenders and youth who were incarcerated or ran into trouble with the law to get back on their feet. To get employment, to gain a re-entry back into community life, to have their family ties restored, to give them a second chance."

"I just happened upon this old fire station - which was formerly the Las Vegas Heights Community Center - and after talking with several of the Professional Black Firefighters - namely Dave Washington and Sam Smith - this became the home of the Project Youth Life Skills Center," she said.

Project Youth began conducting ongoing job search workshops on Thursday, August 5, 1993, and again on August 12, and will conclude on August 19.

The workshops are being held on three consecutive Thursday's and will involve three phases: Phase I; basic job skill readiness techniques; Phase II, how to fill out a job application

and Phase III, employee role modeling - how to be a "model" employee.

The program has been made mandatory by the State Department of Juvenile Parole and Probation and the Clark County Juvenile Court Services. Smith said that phase one involved nine referrals from the respective agencies and that Nevada State Bank actively participated. She said she expected a greater number of referrals for the last two phases.

Project Youth also launched their own version of the "Scared

Straight" program named appropriately, "Prison 101."

The program took place August 17 at Southern Desert Correctional Center at Indian Springs. It involved a panel of ten inmates who addressed juveniles from 14-18 years of age about the challenges of incarceration. They were as graphic as possible and abusive language and other illustrations were used in order to incite fear and distaste in these juvenile offenders. The youth were selected and referred by the Probation Department.

On Friday, August 20, 1993 Project Youth will conduct a "Back To School Safety Workshop" from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m. at 1201 W. Miller.

Activities will include speakers Rene Diamond, who will be on hand from Congressman Bilbray's office, Frank Hawkins will deliver the keynote speech, Mayor Jan Laverty Jones will issue a proclamation naming the entire day "Youth Day"; there will be plenty of refreshments compliments of Burger King and entertainment for the youth.

(See Project Youth, Page 11)

## REID ANNOUNCES \$8 MILLION HUD COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

WASHINGTON—United States Senator Harry Reid recently announced two grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) totaling \$8,187,000, that will improve community and family programs in Clark County and the City of Las Vegas. The grants, \$3,088,000 for Las Vegas and \$5,099,000 for Clark County, will facilitate already existing projects that are designed to benefit low and moderate income persons. The Community Development Block

Grant Program activities include housing improvements and construction, shelter services, and other community service programs.

"These investments will promote community improvement in areas that are rapidly expanding," Reid said. "These programs are essential to increased economic development and housing rehabilitation. The money will go a long way to help all Las Vegas and Clark County residents enjoy their community."

## SATURN OF WEST SAHARA RECALLING ITS CARS

By Ramon Savoy

With the recent news of an electrical problem that could ignite fires under the hood, Saturn of West Sahara is in the process of contacting all Saturn owners on their files. Since the news came out last week about the recall, an eight man mechanic team has been working overtime to repair the problem, said Rich Abajian, general manager of the only dealership in southern Nevada. "We have even gone as far as to remain open through the weekend to serve the needs of the customer."

Nationally there are over 260 dealerships with over 352,357 Saturns that need to fix the wiring that causes the fires. Wiring between the starter and alternator will be replaced to prevent the fires, but the repair may not cure the short circuits that cause the wire to overheat in the first place, Saturns admits. The recall will cost an estimated \$8 million to the company.

So far there has been 34 short-circuit related fires, but have caused no serious injuries or deaths. Abajian said, that there has not been any wiring problems with the over 5,000 Saturns

sold in the valley since it's opening in late 1990. He also said that the overall response from those that have brought their cars in for the needed repairs has been positive.

This has been the second incident for the Saturn line, which had been tapped as being in the same class as high-quality Japanese automobiles. In 1991, it issued a call-back of it's first models after corrosive coolant was installed in radiators.

"The estimated \$25 per car repair is free and takes approximately 10 minutes to do," said Abajian. "We have been able to do 10 - 15 cars an hour. If the customers doesn't care to wait in the showroom, we treat them to a free buffet."

Saturn portrayed the recall

as an example of how it goes to extraordinary lengths to please customers, who generally have been happy with their investment. "We still have the best car money can buy", claims Henry "Hen Hen" Thoms, salesman for Saturn of West Sahara, who was writing up a new car invoice.

Saturn is still the highest ranked domestic automobile and ranked No. 3 overall in customer satisfaction by J.D. Power and Associates, behind far more expensive Japanese luxury brands Lexus and Infiniti.

With seven different models in production, and forever aware that customer satisfaction is top priority, Abajian still said with pride, "Saturn of West Sahara is recognized as the No. 1 retail facility in the country"

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