

Positive Direction: Making a Difference One Youth at a Time

By Nichole Davis

Positive Direction will host the first annual African-American Male Summit Saturday at Cimmaron Memorial High School, 2301 N. Tenaya Way.

There will be five 45-minute workshops: racism and conflict resolution (hosted by Wendell Williams), relationships and sexual responsibility (hosted by Jeff Howard), career choices and economic empowerment (hosted by Earnest Fountain and Dave Washington), employment readiness and grooming etiquette (hosted by Charles Troutman and Kelcey West), and the history of family and values (hosted by Mujahid Ramadan and Sam Wright).

"There were over 100 topics we voted on," said Kelcey West, the public relations specialist. "We felt those five were the immediate concern."

The organizers chose to host the event at Cimmaron, they wanted to move the youth out of their normal environment for a day. The event is free, but organizers ask that the young men pre-register. (Primarily for food counts) Registration forms are available at area high schools, the West Las Vegas Library and KCEP. Organizers have planned for 150 young men, and as of Tuesday, 100 have registered.

The summit was organized and funded completely by a newly formed group called Positive Direction.

"It (the Summit) was a \$2000 investment. It was an equal partnership among all seven members," said West.

Positive Direction is a group of young men from all walks of life who wanted "to give back."

These are the members of Positive Direction: Jerry Collins, Andre Denson, Ken Evans, Bryan Hopkins, Jeff Howard, Charles Troutman, Lawrence Weekly, and Kelcey West.

Summit speaker Dave Washington is participating for much the same reason.

"Anytime you mention young people, I'm willing to go to work," said Washington. "With

all the hype that's in the media, I believe our young men are at risk." Washington says he has picked up several books on his topic, employment opportunities.

"I'm going to try to carry out the workshops as they asked me to," he continued. "I'm going to focus on a number of skills they will need for work."

Organizers hope this kind of homespun message will

encourage the young men to open up the conversation.

"It's not a lecture series," said West. "We want to bridge the gap between the young and old."

West credits Lawrence Weekly "creating the idea." Weekly came up with the idea and hand-picked the seven people he thought could make it happen. Four months and lots of hard work later, West believes

the event will be successful no matter how many kids ultimately show up.

"Just sponsoring the event like this is a success in itself," he said. "Next year, we'll expand the Summit and solicit corporate sponsorships for funding."

The location may also change next year, because organizers would like to see the event turned into more of a

retreat.

"We think your able to hold someone's attention more if you take them out of their normal environment," explained West. This year, "It's a local retreat for kids who don't live in that area... You can just get away and deal with your goals and objectives."

Organizers have already begun work for a similar summit for women.

Getting the Word Out about Adoption and Foster Care

By Nichole Davis

Did you know that November is National Adoption Awareness Month?

The Division of Child and Family Services, part of the state's Department of Human Resources, is marking the occasion with an adoption/foster care fair on Nov. 18th from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. at the Grant Sawyer Building at 555 W. Washington St., Rm. #4412.

"We're trying to get the word out that there are children out there to be adopted," said Ann Coleman, an adoption specialist. "We're just looking for loving families. Good folks who have a lot of love to share with a child or a group of siblings."

The Adoption/Foster Care Committee estimates that in Nevada there are "approximately 2800 children who live in some type of foster care setting. Many have lived most of their lives in this "temporary" situation, and have moved within the child welfare system more times than they care to remember. Many will never return to their birth families."

On Saturday, prospective adoptive or foster care families can view photos of available

children ranging in age from infancy to 15 years of age.

"It's basically information only," said Coleman. "We only have photos."

Though the state doesn't introduce children to prospective families until later in the process, families can set up interviews to find out the background of the child in which they are interested. There are about 80 children in the state ready for adoption, about half of them are black.

"Most of the African-American children are here in Las Vegas," said Coleman, "not in Washoe County."

Any of these children could be placed as early as seven to nine months from now, according to Coleman. The time involved is determined by several factors among them: caseload of worker, desires of the family, and more. It's important to note that single people, people with children, apartment renters and more are all eligible to adopt or be foster parents. Under certain conditions, the federal government can even provide financial assistance for adoptive and foster parents based on the needs of the child.

"Based on the child's needs not the family's, we can assess them for the medical as well as financial services, under the Adoption Assistance Act," said Coleman.

The state also allows trans-racial adoptions for children who cannot be placed with a family of the same race. This has been a hot topic in the black community, because many people don't feel black children should be raised

by anyone but blacks. The state views the situation differently.

"We don't think a child should linger in the system instead of going into a trans-racial home," said Coleman.

On the other hand, the state does insist that the adoptive parent(s) demonstrate a sincere effort to educate the child about his ethnic culture.

"We don't want them (adoptive parents) to raise a child up to age 18 and not introduce them to black culture," said Coleman. "The kids won't have

COLOR CONFERENCE

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coordinated the Upward Bound program. Haron believes the system teaches kids a whole set of values but parents' values are also important.

"The system should also reflect your values," she said.

Haron discussed nine programs: UNLV's Talent Search and Upward Bound, the Kappa League, Kids for a Better America, the Martin Luther King Jr. Committee, the NAACP Youth Committee, West Las Vegas Rights of Passage, the Park District and YMCA computer programs, and Project Read.

Many of the programs are free or had only nominal fees. For more information about any of these programs, call Haron at 895-4165.

Speaker Wallace Edwards, a coordinator at AFAN, spoke about recent federal cutbacks on preventative education for AIDS. Edwards is one of several people at the local AFAN who

the skills to cope with the real world."

The children that are available tend to fall in the special needs categories. There are four groups in this category: kids age six and older, sibling groups, children with emotional, physical, medical or behavioral problems or all African-American children. Black children constitute a separate category because of their frequency in the system as compared to other racial groups, said Coleman, which forces the agency to do special recruitment

for parents. It isn't always easy.

"Alcohol and drugs are the number one reason children come into our system," said Coleman. "Families are scared."

By hosting events like the fair, workers hope that they will have an opportunity to show the public that these children are adoptable, lovable and affordable.

After all, the state does not charge for special needs adoptions. For more information call Ann Coleman at 486-5195 or Beverly Crosby at 486-6178.



IDA B. WELLS

not nearly enough food. Edwards told of bureaucratic policy urging the center to provide only enough food for the parents in families stricken with multiple cases of AIDS, because...

"The Bureau of Drugs and Alcohol doesn't have the money for children, but we couldn't do that."

Edwards described how difficult it was to find shelter for participants with the \$277 per month that they are provided by governmental agencies for housing. He described a scene at the Moulin Rouge recently where he secured a for a client. According to Edwards, the room

(See Color Conference, Pg 18)

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