



Students from Booker Elementary School rehearse *The African Can Dance* in preparation for performances during Black History month. Photo by Savoy/LVS-Voice

## Las Vegas Readies for Black History Month

By Nichole Davis  
Sentinel-Voice

Las Vegas can observe Black History Month artistically this year.

Booker Elementary School's Performing Arts Group will mark the month with performances at local schools.

Teacher Elliott Lowery has created a 30-minute presentation combining dance, song and drama featuring such songs as James Weldon Johnson's *Lift Every Voice and Sing* and Duke Ellington's *Love You Madly*.

"We've been doing most of the pieces since last year, and

we added a few new pieces," Lowery said.

He wanted to make it more multi-cultural, so he added dances and songs from around the world. Students will sing *Hock Yo*, a Korean traditional song, and *Yo Soy*, a Spanish traditional song.

Lowery also choreographed two African dances, the *Fonga* from South Africa and the *Can Dance*, a rhythm dance featuring students beating on cans.

A short drama about Martin Luther King Jr. and poem about Harriet Tubman, who guided slaves along the Underground Railroad, is also included.

The performance can be seen year-round by School District students, Lowery said.

"I want people to celebrate Black History Month all year," he said.

The act is currently scheduled to perform at one school in late February, and, Lowery said, he expects more schools will send in requests within the next week.

The West Las Vegas Cultural Arts Center, 941 W. Lake Mead Blvd., will host two events during February: a Lindy dance workshop for Prime Six on Feb. 9 and the *History of Lindy*, a series of workshops and lectures. (See *Black History*, Page 3)

## 15 of Nevada's Black Pioneers to be Honored Third Annual Cultural Arts Festival Celebrates African American History

The Walker African American Museum and Research Center will host their third annual African American Cultural Arts Festival on Saturday and Sunday, February 3rd and 4th. The festival, which will feature a host of vendors and exhibitors, comes during the first week of February in recognition of Black History Month.

This year, the outdoor festival, which will be broadcast live on KCEP Radio 88.1 FM, will be held in the parking lot of the new Vons store in Magic's Westland Plaza, 1061 West Owens. Opening ceremonies begin Saturday, Feb. 3 at 11:00 a.m., with festival hours being 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days.

Entertainment, as in the past two festivals, will consist of poetry, gospel, rap, blues, jazz and reggae music, as well as African dance, plays, skits, and more.

Organization founder and president, Gwen Walker, is especially excited about this year's festival, as this will be the first year "Black Pioneers of Nevada," an annual booklet honoring Nevada's many African American pioneers and leaders, will be available at the festival.

A staunch advocate for promoting black history, Walker's ultimate goal is to build a \$1 million African American museum and research center in West Las Vegas which will feature exhibits that highlight the many contributions African Americans have made to society.

History and culture, says Walker, have primary responsibilities for the lack of guidance in today's youth. "I talk to youngsters sometimes about their ancestry and they can't believe that they come from African kings and queens and warriors," she says. "They look at me in disbelief."

"Our main objective is to promote and preserve the culture of anyone of African descent," Walker adds.

This year, the museum and research center will honor "Black Pioneers of Nevada" in recognition of their contributions to our city and state, not to mention their overall pioneering spirit.

This year's honorees are: Sarann Knight Preddy (first black casino owner), Senator Joe Neal (the state's first black Senator), Lubertha Johnson (Nevada's first black nurse), Linda Hinson (first black city manager for the City of North Las Vegas), Lloyd Bryant (Nevada's first black real estate broker), Brenda Mason (first black to sit on the board of regents for the university system), William "Bob" Bailey (entrepreneur, broadcaster and founder of NEDCO), LaTonya Whitaker (Las Vegas' first black female firefighter), Claude Perkins (Clark County School District's first black school superintendent), Rev. Charles Wyatt (the first black chaplain at Jean prison and one of Las Vegas' first black police officers), Peter Sampson (the first black blackjack dealer on the Strip), Aaron Williams (North Las Vegas' first black city councilman and the first black Clark County Commissioner), Lawrence Wickliffe (area's first black paramedic).

"We are very excited and proud to honor these black pioneers of Nevada," says Walker, "and we would like to solicit the community's support by asking them to submit any information and/or photos on any black persons that have contributed to the history of the state of Nevada, to the Walker African American Museum, as well as for future issues of "Black Pioneers of Nevada."

Also, in conjunction with the festival, which is sponsored this year by Vons, First Interstate Bank, Jimmy's Westside Market, and Nika's Afrocentric Gifts, there will be a program at New Jerusalem Baptist Church entitled "Reflections of Your History Through Gospel," hosted by Rev. Sam Roberson.

Entertainers who wish to perform at the festival are asked to call 642-8748 or 593-8998. For more information on booth rentals, vendors can call 647-2242.

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