

HOUSING AUTHORITY

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received the lowest marks: Overall, the agency improved nearly 15 percentage points over fiscal year 1994 receiving a final score of 78.6 percent.

Mayor Jan Jones, who heads the Housing Authority Executive Committee, credits the improvements to the hard work Housing Authority officials did over the past 18 months.

"It's a very difficult position, but I think we have made more progress in the last year and a half than we have in the last five years," Jones said.

The claims were filed mainly against housing authority officials, who no longer work with the agency, she said. Many of the problems in fact have been addressed, but the records were not well maintained, she said.

"When you deal with HUD, it's not just handling; it's documentation," Jones said.

"That's what the housing authority had never done. They hadn't generated the real solution on paper," she said.

Housing Authority Executive Director Fred Brown drew up a list of addendas the Housing Authority intended to follow as part of the agreement, which was formally signed Jan 22.

Among the promised improvements, the housing authority will do a national search for a deputy director. The post had remained empty since the expiration of former executive director Thomas Gholson's term.

The agency has also agreed to revise the maintenance policy, updating turnaround time for units, revise written work-order policy and procedures, develop written preventative maintenance procedures, and obtain outside assistance to help collect rent.

Although the terms for most of the settlements were not disclosed, at least four tenants were given vouchers to move into Section 8, another federal housing program, homes.

Said Ryan, "Hopefully this will improve conditions all over the housing authority, not just in West Las Vegas."

SNYDER

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as, technological advancement," Snyder said.

"Our involvement and presence will create more business opportunities for members and increase the chamber's visibility and recognition in the Valley," he said.

After urging members to become active in the decision making processes of the chamber, Snyder said the group

wants "to develop more business partnerships and reciprocal relationships and promote our city and market our organization."

Snyder, a University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate, has been a Clark County resident for 15 years.

A former U.S. Marine, Snyder has been involved with the Chamber for three years. He was elected by members of the executive board.

Black Organ Donors Needed

By Nichole Davis
Sentinel-Voice

A shortage of black is organs is one side effect of African-American distrust of the medical profession.

Statistically, blacks make up 60 percent of the organ waiting list locally but are only 7.5 percent of the donors, according to latest figures provided by the Nevada Donors Network.

"In 1995, we had 90 patients waiting for kidneys, and 54 were African-American," said Ken Richardson, executive director of the Nevada Donors Network.

Richardson cited several reasons for the local crisis including people's fears of death and dying, black's fear of the medical establishment, and a lack of outreach.

"All of us whether we're African-American, Asian, Hispanic, or whatever have a hard time dealing with our own death, and none of us does a good job of dealing with that on a personal level," he said.

"I think anything that forces us to look at death and dying on a personal level will have problems," Richardson said.

Combine that fear with residual feelings from incidents like the Tuskegee Experiment and the task becomes daunting.

At least 400 black men died of syphilis while they participated without their knowledge or consent in the Tuskegee Experiment from the late 1940s until the early 1970s. Doctors allowed the then treatable infection to run its course, reportedly telling some men

they had "bad blood" when they questioned their symptoms.

"I think the Tuskegee Experiment has had a major

impact on how blacks view medicine in general," Richardson said. "It has probably damaged the credibility of the profession."

"We have a long history to get over in terms of our race relations, and when something as relatively recent as the Tuskegee Experiment in the 40s happens, it takes forever to rebuild that trust that's been damaged from that kind of incident," he said.

The local figures on donation and transplantation are the tip of the iceberg. Nationwide blacks make up about 30 percent of the national donor waiting list and about 12 percent of the donors.

The shortage of black donors has caused several problems for potential recipients including longer waits for organs and lower survival rates.

Although the exact length of an average wait is in dispute, researchers estimate that blacks wait longer for organs than whites.

In a 1992 paper, researchers said the wait was 11.9 months for whites and 15.4 months for blacks than whites, but government figures differ.

A 1991 Inspector General's Report said the wait was actually 7.6 months for whites on average and 13.9 months for blacks, nearly twice as long.

The additional wait has had devastating impacts on potential recipients. Forty-nine percent of the people "waiting and dying (on the national waiting list) are minorities," according to reports issued by the Minority Organ Tissue Transplantation Education Program.

Dr. Clive Callender, a Howard University transplant specialist and MOTTEP founder, has

published several papers on transplantation where he said transplants are 10-20 percent less successful for blacks than whites, because blacks receive non-black organs.

Callender said some of the problems stems from the way cadaver organs, which come from dead donors, are distributed.

The organs are given out on a "discriminatory point based system which is based upon Caucasian antigens," he said.

The point system, which was recently revised, is used by the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), to distribute organs. UNOS, which maintains the national organ waiting list, gave points for close tissue matches using HLA-antigen combinations.

The antigen combinations, which are common to whites and less common to blacks, were not, however, proven to reduce rejection rates.

Ethnic groups are more likely to have a good match within their own ethnic group, said Richardson.

"Within each race there are more common antigens. That's not to say that an African-American cannot receive an organ from a Caucasian and vice versa.

"What's actually happening on the national scale is that African-Americans tend to get more organs from white donations than black donations," he said.

The policy was changed last year after a minority affairs committee questioned the it, according to UNOS literature.

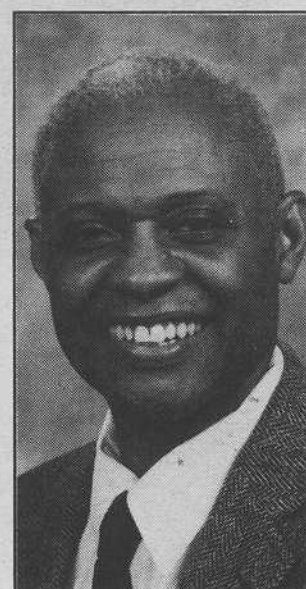
Medical urgency, which is assessed by local physicians, had its' points increased as well, said UNOS spokesman Joel Newman.

Newman acknowledges that even with the changes, blacks still have longer waiting times than whites, but he said it was due to more than antigens.

Callender agrees.

"It's one of the reasons, not the only reason," Callender said.

Experts said the easiest



DR. CLIVE CALLENDER

solution for blacks would be to donate more organs, but they realize the lack of education and trust are their biggest obstacles.

"There are realities out there we have to address. Some of them have to do with organ donation itself. Some of them have to do with the issue of trust between the races," Richardson said.

To improve minority involvement in organ donation, the Nevada Donor Network has set up a minority advisory council to help advise them of better ways to increase donation among minorities.

"I do believe we need to do a better job of reaching out to the minority community involved with the issue of organ donation," Richardson said.

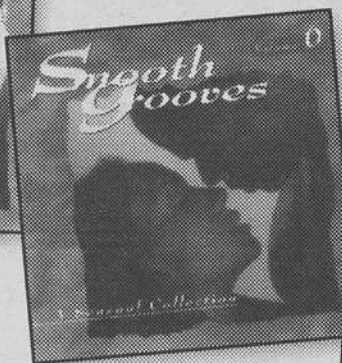
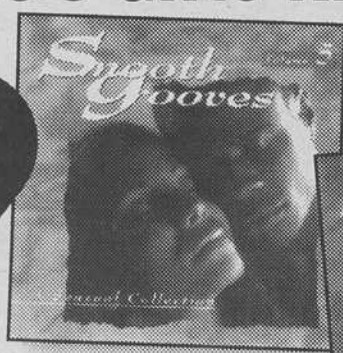
"Unless you're an African-American, Asian or Hispanic, you have a cultural perspective that Caucasians don't have. (We need to) include minorities in our committees, in our structure and follow the advice they give us," he said.

Organ donation is the ultimate combining of the races, because it represents more than just medical miracles, Richardson said.

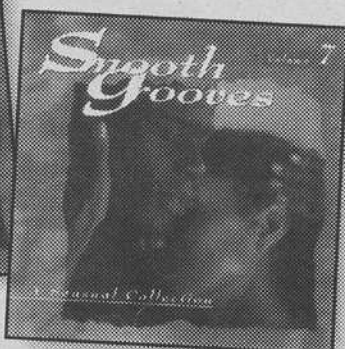
"It really is a social phenomenon instead of a medical phenomenon," he said.

"It's the only kind of medical therapy that requires giving something to a stranger, an organ."

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