

NEWS CLIPS

McCONNELL STEPS ASIDE ON URBAN CHAMBER

Al McConnell, fulfilling his term as interim president of the Urban Chamber of Commerce on Sept. 30 will step down from the Board of Directors Oct. 31. McConnell was named as president of the board during a special election in May. The focus of the interim board was to reorganize the chamber and ready it for new leadership and operation. McConnell, citing family reasons, decided against pursuing the position full-time. But "with the help of the business community in providing good leaders for the chamber, we believe the chamber can provide good leadership for the business community."

SOUTH AFRICAN MURALIST ON US TOUR

Internationally known South African muralist/artist and "Cultural Ambassador for South Africa," is showing her unique work across the U.S. She is credited with keeping the Ndebele art form alive throughout the hardships of the Apartheid era, and being the first woman to introduce Ndebele culture and art to non-South Africans. She is the 12th person and the only woman to paint a mural for the BMW Art Car, joining the previously all-male ranks with Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg. In 1994, Esther first visited America to exhibit and paint a building facade for the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. This 64-year-old-grandmother, was born in Middleburg, Transvaal, South Africa.

COCHRAN CHALLENGES GOVERNMENT WORKERS

Reknown attorney Johnnie Cochran recently challenged black government workers to become advocates for the disadvantaged and less fortunate, "those who have no one to speak up for them, those whom no one seems to care about." Cochran was speaking to more than 5,000 government workers attending the closing banquet, Aug. 27 of the 18th Annual National Training Conference. Government employees - from federal, state, and local agencies, were urged to renew their commitment to civil rights, to commit at least three hours a week to volunteer activities in their communities and to set a new standard of excellence in public service. "Able" Mable Thomas, an Atlanta grassroots leader, was the keynote speaker at the opening session. She said, "We must create opportunities in the community to assist our people. It is important to dedicate yourself to serving as a volunteer at least three hours per week. But, you must be a solid volunteer."

GRENADINES SAY NO TO U.S. BASE

The location of a U.S. base on the island of Petite Martinique to reportedly fight the illegal drug trade, is turning into a battle between residents and government officials. "We are convinced that a U.S. sponsored coast guard base on the playground of a primary and pre-primary school in Petite Martinique will do much more harm than good, not only in terms of the international war on drugs itself, but more so for the children whose lives from kindergarten right through primary school would be influenced directly on a daily basis by the lifestyle and well-known reputation that's associated with such military facilities as a base," said political activist, Michael Caesar. But the government says the project is another step forward in its fight against illegal drugs and will go ahead despite protests. Governments in the region have been concerned that the geographic location of the islands and countries make them a prime route for drug trafficking. Regional police authorities have been warning that the entire Caribbean is being targeted as a drug trans-shipment point by South American producers unable to penetrate traditional routes. The base is expected to cost in the region of \$22,000 and construction will begin between April and May next year, when some 100 U.S. soldiers are expected to arrive on the island.

BRICKS, BOUQUETS FOR NAMIBIA SOLAR ENERGY

The introduction of solar energy in Namibia's rural schools is a major breakthrough for students. Now they can study without straining their eyes in the weak glow of candlelight. For clinics, it means longer hours and a chance to treat more patients. But villagers in the Caprivi area say it is not strong enough for cooking and feel they have wasted their money buying the photovoltaic panels they need to use the power supply. However, Paulinus Shilamba, deputy director of the country's electricity division, says demand for solar systems is overwhelming. "These things have limits, it depends on the size of the system. However solar energy is better than using cow dung or firewood. It is reliable and you can use it for 20 to 25 years." The government introduced solar technology when it recognized the need to bridge the gap between rural and urban people's quality of life. This alternative option was chosen because conventional electrification would be costly and impractical. To help villagers purchase solar energy systems, the Ministry of Mines and Energy, in conjunction with the U.S.-based Renewable Energy for African Development (REFAD), has established the Namibian Development Corporation (NDC), which grants loans to interested rural households.

Program offers fathers new options

By Nichole Davis
Sentinel-Voice

Father of four Avery Victorian faced jail time for the third time in 10 years for not paying his child support last month, but thanks to a new state-run jobs program, he started at a new workplace Tuesday instead of going to jail.

The Non-Custodial Parent Employment and Training program started in August but already 14 of its 43 participants, counting Victorian, have found full-time work through the project, which was jointly organized by the state's welfare and district attorney's offices along with Family Court, said Tyrone Thompson, a support enforcement/employment and training specialist.

For Victorian, who is married and has custody of all but one of his children, he said the program gave him more time to find work after being laid off from Silver State Disposal last month.

"I got tired of being in that little jail house. It's a waste of time," Victorian said Monday.

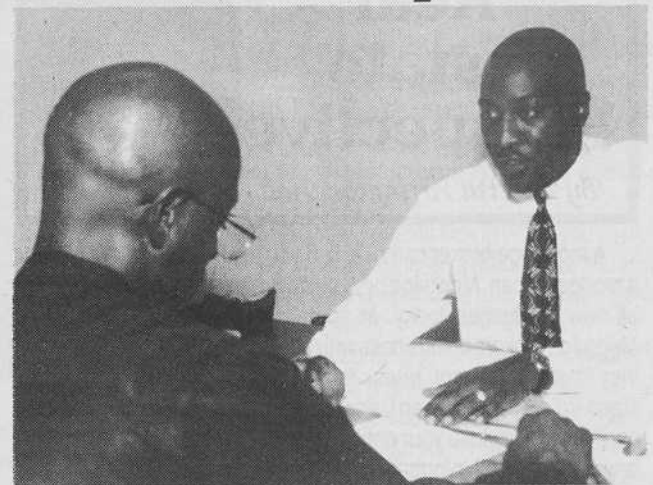
"You know what you're supposed to do, but it gets so hard sometimes because they want to take so much from you."

As much as 36 percent of his gross salary - 18 percent per child on support - can be taken from his earnings but that will be decided at the discretion of the presiding judge. So although he's happy about his new job, Thompson won't know how much money he will take home to his family until he sees his judge next month.

"Having kids is all right, but this is a headache," he said.

Victorian's concerns are faced by every parent in the program, but so far it hasn't stopped people from trying to get work, Thompson said.

The scope of the program is narrow, only people who owe money to current or past welfare recipients qualify. Non-paying parents of both sexes get one-on-one job counseling, attend support groups and get targeted training through Nevada Business Services and Nevada



Nevada's non-custodial parent employment and training specialist, Tyrone Thompson, recently explains the support enforcement program to participant Avery Victorian.

Photos by Savoy/LVS-Voice

Partners. They can even interview for jobs during program-sponsored job fairs.

Participants have up to six months to find employment, but the goal is for them to do so within four, officials said. That way parents can be watched to make sure they keep their jobs, officials said.

Thompson has just begun to compile data on the participants.

The average non-paying parent is a 30-year-old man with two kids. But there are a few women in the program.

Thus far, most of the participants have been black, but officials said that has just been the luck of the draw. Blacks are not more likely to avoid paying child support, Thompson said.

Already there have been two smoke outs, parents who really have jobs who try to dodge paying child support payments by going through the program. But more participants are just "working under the table jobs," he said. "Our goal is to get them a job we can take withholding from. "We've had some very talented men who've had a falling back in their lives," Thompson said.

The community can assist the pilot project by donating old interviewing clothes of all sizes, he said. The donations must be in good condition. They will be used. For more information about the program, call Thompson at 486-8500.

Residents step up with new jobs project

By Nichole Davis
Sentinel-Voice

The Las Vegas Housing Authority announced a new program last week geared to moving unskilled public housing residents into fully-trained construction-related careers within two years.

The agency received approval for 15 openings in the Step-Up program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The goal of Step-Up is to teach trades like carpentry, plumbing and painting during a two-year paid training program.

During the first four weeks of the program, which is set to begin in January, participants will learn basic carpentry, print reading, electrical, plumbing and math skills. A wide variety of classes will also be taught during the next month when they will take life skills training.

The next eight months is strictly geared toward on-the-job training. Participants will be introduced to every available trade before they are asked to

pick one for intense study. They are then matched with a trade-union journeymen with whom they will work for the next year, officials said.

At the end of the program, participants will be eligible to join the trade union of their choice and start work in the private sector.

And, "they'll be compensated (financially) from the day they start until the day they finish," said Sandy Toles, a spokeswoman for Mayor Jan Jones.

Public officials are excited about the program which they believe empowers residents to lead more productive lives.

"As many opportunities as can be provided to help people obtain job skills to move people from welfare to work should be made available," said Housing Authority Assistant Executive Director Betty Turner.

The program requires applicants to be residents of public housing; unemployed or underemployed head of households and/or former gang members will be given priority

consideration. They should be American citizens or permanent legal resident, at least 18 years and able to do reading and mathematics at the 8th grade level.

Additionally, residents will have to pass a physical exam and drug test and should have a high school diploma or a G.E.D. This educational requirement can be temporarily waived if the resident agrees to obtain either before the completion of the program.

For more information, contact the Las Vegas Housing Authority.



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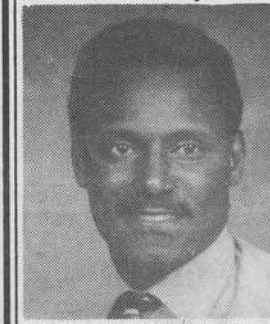
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