

LAS VEGAS

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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"



Members of the Morgan State University Choir wowed the audience.

Photo by John Broussard

Choir gala hits right notes!

By Damon Hodge
Sentinel-Voice

The operatic musings of the Boston Philharmonic. The jazz/blues twang of early 20th century Harlem. The Negro spirituals.

Last week's Vocal Extravaganza "in Black," a first-time event showcasing musical talent from Historically Black Colleges (HBCUs), painted musical collage.

Choirs and soloists from 17 HBCUs

competed for \$25,000 in prizes in three musical styles: classical (opera, operetta, oratorio), traditional (gospel, spiritual, folk) and contemporary (jazz, theatrical, blues).

Residents, first-timers and organizers praised the event.

"There are a lot of young people (in the event) with promising futures," said Allison Newlon, a local businesswoman.

She praised the volunteer effort that brought

the event to fruition.

Helen Oakes, a five-year resident and transplanted New Yorker, loves Las Vegas' new-found cultural identity.

"This is great," she said. "(Culturally) Las Vegas is getting better all the time. That's why I moved here."

California-native and two-year resident Carlene Freeman said the event was one of
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Racist neighbor moving

Woman's antics spark call for local hate, crime law

By Nancy Watson
Sentinel-Voice

It wasn't unusual for James and Margaret Brooks to awake in the morning, pull back their dining room window drapes and see the letters, "KKK" spray painted on the wall of the house next door.

For the past two years, the retired couple, who live on Sunrise Mountain, have listened as the next-door neighbor shouted racial slurs at them.

The police told them there's not much they can do. The couple had become so afraid they stopped going to evening church services.

A resolution to the taunting will come this weekend when the neighbor, a white female, is evicted from the house.

Dan Paulsen, a local man who financed the neighbor's purchase of the house is foreclosing on the property. By Monday, the family will be locked out.

The Brooks bought their home in July of 1994. In January of 1995, their neighbors moved in. Everything seemed fine for awhile.

Then their sprinkler system was dug up so that the neighbors could build a brick fence inside the Brooks' property line. The fence never went up, the sprinkler system still lies in the trench, the Brooks said.

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LV Weed & Seed hosts national training conference

By Damon Hodge
Sentinel-Voice

Community development professionals and government representatives, including a high-ranking Clinton administration official, gathered this week in Las Vegas to praise the city's innovative approach to community uplift.

By coupling federal community redevelopment efforts with public/private sector funds, Las Vegas has created a successful blueprint to community outreach, according to Reggie Robinson, U.S. Department of Justice Deputy Associate Attorney General.

Robinson joined 184 people from 50 cities at this week's National Congress for Community Economic Development Weed & Seed Training Conference at the Alexis Park Hotel.

Participants studied the success of the Las Vegas' Weed & Seed program, dialogued with community development professionals, performed case studies, discussed different funding sources and attended workshops.

Participants also toured local Weed & Seed

communities and interacted with their residents.

"Las Vegas had done a better job of linking the Weed and Seed program to economic development than most cities in the nation," Robinson said.

Local "Seed" Program coordinator Franklin Simpson said the program's success provides a blueprint for other states to replicate.

Creig Brown, with New Orleans' Mayor Marc Morial's office, praised Simpson and the local program.

"Las Vegas is extremely innovative in its public/private partnership," Brown said. "The city is moving away from depending on federal dollars (to finance empowerment programs)."

Elaine Black, executive director of Tools for Change, a black, Florida-based economic development coalition, hopes that by studying Las Vegas' success, she can mirror it in Dade County, Florida.

"I want to identify what federal programs are available for my area and how to access more public funds (for my area)," she said.

Since Shreveport, Louisiana's Weed & Seed funds run out next year, Robert Brewster, a city government representative, hopes to arm himself with new funding ideas. He attended the session on "Tapping Community Economic Development Resources."

Elise Anfield, a Portland, Ore. representative, came to learn how her city can use Weed & Seed funds to restore a successful community policing program nearly shelved because of a new property tax limitation.

Simpson bussed participants to Weed & Seed communities to meet residents in the conference. They dined at Chez Place and attended a reception at the Stratosphere Hotel where several Weed & Seed fund recipients performed.

Simpson hopes the program's success and the unique conference format can land the city a national training center designation. New Orleans, San Diego, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, Seattle and Mobile, Ala., are all in the running, Simpson said.

Stephen Rickman, director of the Executive Office for Weed & Seed, praised Simpson and the local Weed & Staff for their trailblazing efforts.

"The city has committed leadership," Rickman said. "And the mayor's idea to send kids in the Weed & Seed areas to college is a model for the rest of the nation."

Developed during the Bush Administration, Weed & Seed is a three-year program aimed at replacing violence, drugs, gangs and crime with social, educational, environmental and economic revitalization.

The Las Vegas Weed & Seed initiative began in August 1992, with Meadows Village as its first site. In 1994, the U.S. Department of Justice Weed & Seed Program awarded the city federal funding for Meadows Village and West Las Vegas.

Since 1994, 20 local Weed & Seed subrecipients have been allocated \$191,735 for a wide range of services.

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