

Education Today

By Teresa Thorne

A friend of mine was telling me about a recent Christmas vacation visit from her stepsons.

The boys mentioned that the schools they're in no longer permit the children to sing any religious carols. Any religious symbols, such as a creche or menorah, are for-bidden. Even the mention of the birth of Christ, the very reason for Christmas, is taboo!

In our zeal to enforce the Constitution's First Amendment, which says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances," we've gone astray. What we hear referred to more commonly is "the separation of church and state." That's fine. However, our Founding Fathers DID NOT mean to ban the mere mention of the word God in schools, nor did they feel that prayer in schools was a threat to the First Amendment. They were quite simply establishing freedom of religion and banning a state-sanctioned religion. As you must know, England, the country against which we rebelled, has such a religion. In fact, the reigning monarch bears the title, "Defender of the Faith."

Dating back to when Henry VIII broke from the Roman Catholic Church in order to divorce his wife, kings and queens have presided over the Anglican church. Religious persecution was common.

This was at the very heart of how this country was born. If you recall, the Puritans who landed at Plymouth were escaping religious persecution in their own country. They looked to the New World to provide a new start- and they weren't the only religious group to do so.

Somehow, though, in the 1960s, everything became skewed in this regard. Perhaps it was a reflection of the times. More likely, it was a reflection of the liberal judges who held an iron grip upon the Supreme Court.

Brought because of an atheist's objections to any references to God in the classroom, the Supreme Court ruled in 1962, *Engel v. Vitale*, that public school officials could not require pupils to recite a state-composed prayer at the start of each school day, even if the prayer was nondenominational and pupils who so desired could be excused from reciting it. The words, "under God," were removed from the Pledge of Allegiance as well.

Such hysteria is unwarranted and just plain wrong. The Court's interpretation of the Constitution's First Amendment was also flat-out wrong. By reciting a prayer at the beginning of a school day, those students who wished to do so were exercising their rights of free speech. Those students who objected were not forced to partake in any state-sanctioned religious rituals.

Phi Theta Kappa to hold AIDS fundraiser

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Alpha Xi Beta chapter of Phi Theta Kappa will host a fundraiser for Reach Out Pediatric AIDS 6 p.m. Wednesday, April 16 at the Community College of Southern Nevada's Cheyenne campus. Tickets for the event, in the Horn Auditorium, are \$7.00. Guest speakers are Dr. Jerry Kade, Ann Occhi, Sarah Serma and Cindy Small.

New Vision theater, Kelly Roth & Dancers and the CCSN Dance Ensemble will provide entertainment.

For tickets or more information, stop by the Phi Theta Kappa office on the Cheyenne campus or call 651-4012 or 898-9175.

CCSN Foundation celebrates college's progress

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Community College of Southern Nevada will spotlight its exceptional students and faculty at its 2nd Annual Gala April 19 at the Cheyenne campus at 6:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$150. Guests may purchase group tables of ten. All proceeds will support students scholarships, academic program expansion and new

equipment.

The gala will feature a wine and champagne reception, photo in a Winston Cup racer, auto displays, award-winning gourmet dining, an auction, live music and gaming, cooking demos and dessert, cordials, coffees of the world and more.

Reservations can be made by calling the Foundation Office at 651-4319.

EDUCATION

Kit Carson students 'capitolize' on experience

By Damon Hodge
Sentinel-Voice

Thirteen Kit Carson fifth-graders will spend a day in the state capitol touring the state capitol and learning that democracy doesn't just work for grown-ups.

Ten-year-old Howard Cuveston is excited about the trip.

"I've never been to Carson City before," he said. "I'm ready to go the big kahuna's place (governor's mansion)."

Cuveston is one of 13 kids Gifted & Talented program students who will tour state buildings, eat at the governor's mansion, sit in on an educational committee

meeting and introduce a bill to archive black frontiersman James Beckworth into state annals and put him into state teaching curriculum.

The students were chosen on achievement, behavior and school performance, according to learning strategist Bobby Heath.

"This is a valuable experience for the kids," Heath said. "It's something they will remember for the rest of their lives."

Heath and Principal Linda Gibson will chaperone the trip.

After an early morning flight, it's off to tour state buildings, a museum and the University of Nevada, Reno,

Heath said.

After lunch at the governor's mansion, the students will trek to an educational committee meeting and introduce a bill aimed at recognizing James Beckworth's contribution to state and national history.

Beckworth uncovered Beckworth Pass, modern-day Route 170 northwest of Reno, Heath said. The pass accessed a pathway through the Sierra Nevada Mountains and to the California gold rush, Heath said.

Heath said Beckworth frequently led pioneers like Kit Carson, John C. Fremont and Jim Bridger on expeditions.

Carson, Fremont and Bridger have schools and streets named after them, Beckworth doesn't, she said.

The students researched Beckworth. Their political allies handled the most of the cost.

Assemblyman Wendell Williams, District 6, assisted with the bill's format, Heath said. Williams and Assembly Ways and Means Committee Chairman Morse Arberry financed the food and lodging, and Congressman John Ensign, R-Nev., covered a portion of the flight.

The students paid \$40 to cover any loose ends, Heath said.

Project Youth

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"A lot of them feel there's no hope, but I am an example. I can say, 'if I can do it, you can do it, but you've got to believe.' So many of them have no clue, no guidance at all," he said.

The kids listen to him because they know he speaks from the heart and he doesn't mince his words when he describes prison, the alternative to good choices.

"They need to know there's nothing glamorous about prison. There's nothing glamorous about a dirty, rotten, stinking cell and feeling miserable because you can't go home, can't do what you want to do," he said.

Self esteem, respecting and caring for themselves and protecting themselves against HIV are other topics Smith talks to them about.

Although happy for the progress he's made with Project Youth, Smith is discouraged about the lack of community support the group has received since a recent robbery.

Last month, \$10,000 in computers, office supplies, and classroom supplies were stolen from the Project Youth.

Funded by a small, federal Weed and Seed grant, which has been cut, denied a Community Block Development Grant and operating on little more than the charity of Renee and Americorps which pays Ra-Shad, Project Youth continues to serve the kids in the neighborhood everyday.

It offers little more now than a place to go where the adults understand, listen and laugh, although the recent job skills class took place without the computers.

The kids have said they'd like a basketball hoop, they want to form a team, Ra-Shad said he'd coach. It's a clean activity — something he can do with them when they're

hangin' around and goofin' off.

"We've served 4,000 (young people) since Project Youth opened in 1992. There are currently 15 enrolled in classes and others that come by each day," Renee said.

Regarding the small number of youth served, Ra-Shad said, "Project Youth's motto is 'Each one, Reach one, Teach one.'" Just one life saved from prison, is all he asks.

"We're losing so many of

them," he said, "The number of our kids in graveyards and prisons increases daily."

As for his own daughter, Sara Keyosha Smith, who is now six, Ra-Shad sees her nearly everyday and has her weekends.

He feels a strong sense of responsibility for the child and doesn't want her to be fatherless as he was. He said that being a father is hard, but "I do what I have to do," he

said.

He sees his role as a father as being a provider and being emotionally supportive. "Her mother can't do it all," he said.

He watched his own mother do it all and, according to Ra-Shad, she did an excellent job, but she had to work two jobs to provide for her children. He doesn't want his daughter's mother to have to do that.

"I love her, I want her to know she has a father," he said.

You are cordially invited to attend
The Dedication and Sneak Preview
of
The Boys & Girls Clubs of Las Vegas
Corner of Washington & Martin Luther King
Wednesday, April 9th
4:00-6:00 p.m.



4:00 p.m. Dedication by Andre Agassi and local Dignitaries

4:30-6:00 p.m. Tours of Facility

Please come by and join us at
THE POSITIVE PLACE FOR KIDS!



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF LAS VEGAS