

# Young adults police academy aims to make a difference

By Sandra-Dee Fleming  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

"Most people think teenagers are brain dead 'til the age of thirty, but, I'm here to tell you, we have a good group of kids who know what they want and are trying to achieve their goals," said Anica Romero.

Romero was a keynote speaker for the Citizens' Police Academy for Young Adults first graduating class of 1998.

The graduation that took place last Tuesday found Romero extolling the virtues of her twenty classmates. "We are reaching our goals through initiative," she said.

Romero then told the audience what she and her classmates learned over the nine week course: ethics, adult and juvenile law and how to do a car stop.

Lt. Stavros Anthony, training coordinator for the academy, said the purpose of this course "is to give young people the opportunity to learn



Sentinel-Voice photo by Randy Merritt

The first graduating class of the Citizens' Police Academy for Young Adults waited anxiously last Wednesday to receive diplomas for completing the course.

about cops and the work they do. To allow them to interact with police, and see them as 'people' in uniform. We also want to pass on information about the police department and future employment with us."

It worked for Jeremy Lucero.

Lucero, another graduate of the program, admits that the nine-week course has given

him a better understanding of what it takes to be a police officer.

"I now have more real-life knowledge about what they do, how they handle tough situations and the discipline it takes for them to keep their cool," he said.

For him, knowing what an officer goes through daily has made him realize that one bad cop doesn't mean they are all

bad. "Their lives are stressful enough, we need to give them a break," he said.

The evening's other keynote speaker, Family court judge Jerry Hardcastle beseeched the graduates to become modern day American heroes.

Crime and teen pregnancies are on the rise, but Hardcastle said, that should not stop the graduates from becoming heroes. Heroes like parents who work, but still see that their children's homework was done; heroes like the impoverished child, who despite his circumstances graduates from college and becomes a success.

"America is a great land of opportunity; and will give you opportunities if you avail yourself of them," Hardcastle said.

Though the program was started in 1991, this was the first class whose graduates

were between the ages of 16 and 19 years old.

The classes which meet every Tuesday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. give instructions on police ethics, traffic laws, patrol

procedures and other issues. For more information on the Citizens' Police Academy for Young Adults, contact the training bureau at (702) 299-3505.

## McLaurin named DNC director of African-American outreach

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON, DC — Alison McLaurin was promoted to director of African-American Outreach for the Democratic National Committee, officials announced this week.

McLaurin was deputy to the executive director. In her position, McLaurin will oversee the DNC's outreach efforts in the African-American community. A specific area of focus will be increasing the participation of younger African-Americans in the Democratic Party.

McLaurin has been on staff at the DNC since 1994. In addition to working in the executive director's office, she has been the deputy western political Director and worked in the office of African-American Outreach, where she developed and successfully coordinated the DNC's first ever outreach efforts to young African-American students and young adults. She also served as the director of Youth Outreach for the 53rd Presidential Inaugural Committee.

In addition, McLaurin has worked as a reporter for the Medill News Service in Washington, D.C. and the *News & Observer* in Raleigh, N.C.

"We have been very fortunate to have Alison as a member of our staff for the past four years," said Romer, general chairman of the DNC. "And someone with her intelligence and experience as Director of African-American Outreach will be a tremendous asset to the future of the DNC."

McLaurin is a Durham, N.C., native who graduated Magna Cum Laude from Hampton University in Hampton, Va., with a bachelor's degree in mass media arts. She earned her master's in reporting and writing from the Northwestern University School of Journalism.

## Baptist leader Lyons pleads innocent

Special to Sentinel-Voice

CLEARWATER, Fla. — The head of the National Baptist Convention USA Inc., on Monday pleaded innocent to charges that he pilfered money from companies doing business with the nation's largest church denomination.

The Rev. Henry Lyons, who has denied having an affair with a convention employee or misusing funds, pleaded innocent to state charges of racketeering and grand theft.

Walking from the courthouse, the 55-year-old minister said only that he felt "pretty good."

The judge set Jan. 4, 1999 as a tentative trial date. If convicted on all racketeering

and grand theft charges, Lyons could face up to 30 years in prison.

Lyons has been a target of state and federal investigations since last year, when his wife was charged with setting fire to an expensive waterfront house he owned with co-defendant Bernice Edwards, the corporate relations director for the 8.5 million member convention with its 33,000 churches.

Lyons' wife, Deborah, admitted setting the fire at the waterfront house, blaming the arson on her drinking problem. She said she believed her husband was faithful to her.

Edwards, a convicted embezzler Lyons hired,

pleaded innocent Monday to a racketeering charge.

Prosecutors said Lyons and Edwards inflated membership figures to attract private contributions in exchange for product endorsements by the convention.

An affidavit filed in support of the complaint in February called that "a complete hoax" and said the convention really has 500,000 to 1 million members and 4,800 churches.

Since Lyons' troubles began, reports have leaked accusing him of using church funds to buy real estate, cars and jewelry for Edwards. A movement within the Nashville, Tenn.-based denomination arose to oust him

as president, but was given a "yes" vote at the group's annual meeting. Lyons, pastor of Bethel Metropolitan Church in St. Petersburg, Fla., has refused to give up his five-year term. He rose to the presidency of the convention in 1994 as a reformer.

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