

# Middle school students write to end violence

By Deborah Kohen  
Sentinel-Voice

"Do the Write Thing." That's the title of a writing contest administered by the National Campaign to Stop Violence. This year, over 500 local middle school students participated by writing about the ways in which violence has an impact on their lives. On June 1 at UNLV's Richard Tam Alumni Center, the finalists and semi-finalists were honored with a Recognition Dinner.

Students from eleven middle schools competed for honors. In the first round of judging, volunteers from UNLV student organizations read the reams of essays, poems and stories and chose one female and one male semi-finalist from each school. The 22 selected works were then distributed for a second round

of judging to a long list of community VIP's, who selected one male and one female finalist.

Invitees to the dinner included the finalists and semi-finalists and their families, the first-round and second-round judges, and officials from the Clark County School District and UNLV. Bobby Siller, special agent in charge from the Las Vegas field office of the FBI, gave the keynote speech. Booklets containing copies of the twenty-two pieces of writing were distributed. Dinner was served with all the trimmings.

But, says coordinator Lynette Boggs McDonald, the best thing about the dinner was that it afforded an opportunity for all the participants in the process to meet face-to-face, to communicate and share their warmth of feeling and their

desire for a better world. "It was a very positive evening," she said. "Everyone left feeling so good and so warm. Parents and teachers were so proud of the children."

Intergenerational warmth of feeling, recognition and verbal self-expression are in fact some of the goals of the Campaign to Stop Violence challenge program. Statistics compiled by the Baltimore, MD based Annie E. Casey Foundation bring home the urgency of the need for healing solutions in our own Las Vegas Valley: in the last decade, the arrest rate for violent acts perpetrated by youth - robbery, rape, homicide and aggravated assault - has risen 49%, and the rate of teen deaths in Nevada by accident, homicide and suicide has increased by 12%, as compared to 3% nationwide.

One of the strategies behind

the contest is to show teens that they can express their feelings verbally and have an impact without resorting to violence - that they can be part of the solution rather than the problem.

Albert Crosby, Division Manager of Juvenile Detention at the county's Family and Youth Services and one of the VIP judges for the local contest, says the program is "a good tool for young people to learn to express their ideas and to be acknowledged for their efforts. It shows them that positive choices lead to positive results."

However, says McDonald, benefits of the program accrue to adults as well. She says it was an eye-opening experience for her to learn, through reading the students' words, just how much violence and domestic

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Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Alexis Clark, a 7th grader at R. O. Gibson Middle School, was one of the semi-finalists.

## Rider wants pot conviction tossed

Special to Sentinel-Voice

SALEM, Ore. — A state appeals court on Tuesday was urged to throw out Portland Trail Blazers guard Isiah Rider's conviction for possessing a small amount of marijuana.

The talented but troubled Blazers star was cited in October 1996 after a sheriff's deputy spotted him in the back seat of a car in Lake Oswego, allegedly getting ready to smoke marijuana from a crude pipe made from a soda pop can.

Rider, who denied the marijuana was his, was not present for the arguments before the Oregon Court of Appeals.

Possession of less than an ounce of marijuana is not a crime in Oregon. Still, Rider's lawyer, Robert Weaver of Portland, said the conviction and \$500 fine should be tossed out because the deputy who testified against Rider was "confused" about what he saw.

"Mr. Rider didn't do what the officer said he did. It's important to him to clear his name," said Weaver, who also defended ice skater Tonya

Harding after the plot to injure rival skater Nancy Kerrigan.

Douglas Zier, an assistant attorney general who argued the state's case, said there was no doubt that marijuana was found in the car.

Furthermore, Zier said, the deputy "saw the defendant holding the Coke can about two inches from his mouth" as he was preparing to light it.

The appeals court didn't indicate when it would rule on Rider's marijuana conviction, one of several brushes with the law the Blazers guard has had over the years.

Last season the NBA suspended Rider for five games — two following his marijuana conviction and for possessing unregistered cellular phones in California, and three for spitting at a fan in Detroit.

In two seasons with the Blazers, Rider also has been repeatedly benched for missing team meetings, shootarounds and flights.

In February, Rider was suspended for a game by



J.R. RIDER

Blazers coach Mike Dunleavy after Rider walked out during the fourth quarter of a win over the Lakers. The next day, he launched into a lengthy tirade to reporters, alleging racism by Portland

fans and by some members of the Trail Blazers organization.

Rider's marijuana possession citation came after two Clackamas County sheriff's deputies saw two cars stop in a dark spot and turn off their lights along Oregon 43 in Lake Oswego.

The deputies, who were

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## EOB elects businessman as chairman

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Prominent businessman Claude E. Logan took over on July 1 as the new chairman of the Economic Opportunity Board of Clark County.

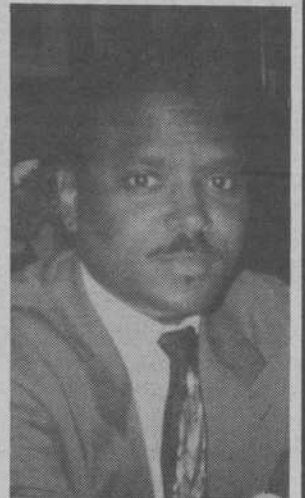
President and CEO of Institutional Food Service Management Corporation, which provides food service to the Clark County Detention Center and the Las Vegas City Jail, Logan is a community activist and a dedicated father of two.

Before being elected chairman, Logan served as the EOB's vice chairman for the last two years, after being a board member for the

previous three years.

He replaces Verlia Grice Davis, who will continue as an executive board member of the EOB. State Sen. Joe Neal, a North Las Vegas Democrat running for governor, is the new vice chairman.

One of the largest and oldest private, non-profit community action agencies in the nation, the Economic Opportunity Board serves more than 40,000 county residents through 25 social welfare programs it administers, including clinics, housing and micro business programs, handicapped and senior transportation programs, a substance abuse treatment



CLAUDE LOGAN

center, Head Start and the Foster Grandparent Program.

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