

Afromation honors legendary black figures

Catisha Marsh
Sentinel-Voice

Ever notice that black history month is the shortest, coldest month of the year?

Well, it's no conspiracy. African-Americans chose February, at least according to a local writer.

"We gave the month to ourselves," said Michael Woods, publisher and author of *Afromation: 366 Days of American History*. "Carter G. Woodson actually started celebrating black history during the second week in February in honor of Frederick Douglass' birthday. Black history during the entire month was the next step in the progression. Next, we'll celebrate it all year."

Woods will present the story behind his book Saturday, at the West Las Vegas Library Theatre, 951 West Lake Mead Blvd. at 5 p.m. The presentation and book-signing to follow

are part of a week of Kwanzaa activities sponsored by the West Las Vegas Kwanzaa Committee.

The book is a detailed compilation of legendary African-Americans. Each day highlights a different black person and suggests sources for further reading.

Woods conceived the idea of creating the volume five years ago when a friend gave him a black history quiz and he couldn't answer one question. Shamed, he went to the library and studied on his own.

"At first, when I started finding out how much we'd done but nobody ever taught or knew, I was angry. Then, I got over it and set out to prove we were more than just slaves," he said.

Although a biographer and publisher, Woods has his own story to tell. Once homeless, he struggled to get his life together.

He felt that that period of his life was like "going through the wilderness to prepare him for now" and attributes his current success to God's graces. He came to Las Vegas to get married in November.

Another autobiographical work, *The Shortest Month* is due out next year.

Writing *Afromation* has sparked a movement to change the American curriculum to one of inclusion.

Woods said that history needs to be revised because African-American history is American history.

He'll kick off his national tour in February to fulfill the two-prong goals of writing the book: enlighten people about American history and integrate the curriculum.

Afromation is available at Native Son Bookstore and online at www.amazon.com. Those interested can call (702) 392-1944.



MICHAEL WOODS

Local poets gather for love of verse

John T. Stevens III
Special to Sentinel-Voice

If poetry is your thing,
The Arts Center sure does swing!
You can hear your favorite bard,
At 947 West Lake Mead Boulevard.

The West Las Vegas Arts Center was the spot for self-expression and cultural enlightenment on Friday at the Poet's Corner, where a group of African-Americans gather every eight weeks to listen to and share poetry.

"Come and share your works," Ellis Rice, arts center cultural activities specialist, said. "It helps us all to grow."

"I've been writing all my life," said Pat Davis who has had four of her poems published by World of Poetry. "I've just now put it down on paper."

More than 30 people came to the most recent gathering. "African-American poets have no place to express and showcase their work," Keith Brantley said. "I would like to

encourage some local club in the area to sponsor an open night for African-American poets."

Brantley has self-published two books, *Griot Spins* and *Modern Griot* which he wrote to celebrate the spirit of Kwanzaa. He's received the Golden Poet and the Silver Poet awards from the World of Poetry which publishes an anthology of poets. Brantley also conducts poetry workshops every Saturday from 2:30 to 4:30 pm at the arts center.

"Writing helps me to say what I want to say without saying it," said Clark High School junior Trinity Smith who is 16. "Writing is for everyone, but not everyone can write, but everyone can listen."

Writers who participated in the Poets' Corner will share their work at the Karamu Feast and Reception for Kumba Poets and Visual Artists at the arts center next Thursday at noon. There will be African delicacies, music, dance and the Izulu Poets celebrating Kwanzaa. Admission is free.

Those interested can call 229-4800.

Community Health Center reduces staff

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Nineteen employees were fired from their jobs at the Community Health Center earlier this month.

Officials said the center let the workers go Dec. 11 to compensate for a \$1 million restructuring project regarding Medicaid. Medical assistants, front desk personnel, administrators, administrative assistants, mid-level management,

nurses and doctors lost their jobs.

"Payroll is the largest portion of our expenses," said interim Executive Director Ken Moore. "In order to survive in the future, we had to cut out a million dollars from that area."

Moore said that if the center can increase its volume of patients or get more from medicare reimbursement, he could rehire some workers who were laid off.

For 10 years, the center has served as a hub for residents who cannot afford to pay standard medical costs, says Larry Gamell, community relations consultant at the center. "People still deserve the best medical treatment because illness is the same."

Among the programs the center runs are Baby Find, a program that guides women from pregnancy through the first two years of child-rearing.

They also house AFAN -- an AIDS outreach initiative -- WIC, a nutrition assistance program and a dental office.

The nonprofit center gets

federal and state funding and operates on private donations, Medicare and patients who can pay.

In spite of the reduction, the center plans to move next year to a new facility on Vegas Drive and Martin Luther King Boulevard. Officials have worked out an agreement with the city and county governments to rent the building for \$1 per year.

The federal government has also chosen the center as a test site for a new, state-of-the-art computer network for health centers.

Moore said that all these measures are being taken to take better care of patients.

Arthur Fletcher keynote speaker at MLK banquet



Dr. Arthur A. Fletcher, former executive director of the United Negro College Fund and one of the men who coined the phrase, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste," will deliver the keynote address at the upcoming Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee's King Banquet.

The dinner, tentatively scheduled for Caesar's Palace on Saturday, Jan. 16, is part of a week-long string of events commemorating the legacy of slain civil rights leader.

The committee has thrown the gala for 18 years and uses the funds raised to pay for King week expenses. Leftover money goes toward scholarships for graduating high school seniors and single parents going back to school. Fletcher, 73, has for years championed equality and civil rights. He first protested discrimination in high school in the '40s when his school relegated pictures of black students to the back of the yearbook.

Fletcher owns and manages Fletcher's Learning Systems, Inc., a firm specializing in creating, producing and marketing audio and video training products, work books and manuals. Those interested in the banquet can call 631-1913 or 799-0670.

C.O.W.

(Continued from Page 1)

me to go farther and not just sit around. My short term goals are to work for either the electric or gas company. In ten years, I would like to be a computer programmer."

In July 1997, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration released data that showed that 41 percent of American white families owned computers, compared to 19.3 percent of Black and 19.4 percent of Hispanic families.

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