

NEWS CLIPS

FOOD DRIVE KICKS OFF IN THE VALLEY

Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada, the National Letter Carriers (NALC), the U.S. Post Office, the United Way and the AFL-CIO have teamed up for the ninth annual food drive to benefit the Las Vegas Valley. On May 8, volunteers will collect and sort food at the Red Rock Vista Post Office, 2449 N. Tenaya, from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m. The food will be distributed to people in crisis through twenty different programs that serve poor and needy people. In 1998, over 72 million pounds of food were collected from all over the nation, with 420,000 pounds of that collected in Las Vegas. Projections for this year are even greater. For more information, contact Laurie Perez, Catholic Charities community relations coordinator at 385-2662.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN NAMED CEO OF AMERICAN EXPRESS

Kenneth Chenault, former vice chairman of American Express (1995) and current president and chief operating officer, has been appointed chief executive officer (CEO) of American Express. Chenault will become the first African-American to serve as CEO of a leading international financial services giant.

ROSA PARKS TO RECEIVE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL

President Clinton signed into law a bill Tuesday awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to Rosa Parks. Parks sparked the 1955 Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott, when she was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white passenger. A bus boycott demanding racial integration of the bus system was initiated and ultimately led to a Supreme Court ruling that segregated buses were unconstitutional. Parks will receive the medal on June 15. Congresswoman Julia Carson, Ind., spearheaded the effort to commemorate Parks.

W.E.B. DuBOIS CHOSEN AS ONE OF TIME'S PEOPLE OF THE CENTURY

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., chair of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University has chosen W.E.B. DuBois as the answer to TIME magazine's "Who Should Be Named Person of the Century?" The new feature, which debuted in TIME in April, invites guest writers to submit their choices for person of the century. Gates chose DuBois, the renowned black intellectual and first black Ph.D. from Harvard, because, he "was one of the founding fathers of the field of sociology, he helped establish the N.A.A.C.P. ... He was an architect of the Harlem Renaissance and the civil rights movement and fought against racial discrimination and for the full participation of blacks in American society." Gates went on to say, "Who could possibly have done more than he to redefine American democracy over 60 years of the 20th century?" Other influential personalities who've been featured are Winston Churchill, nominated by Benjamin Netanyahu, the current Israeli Prime Minister and Adolph Hitler, suggested by U.S. Ambassador Designate to the U.N. Richard Holbrooke. TIME's managing editor, Walter Isaacson will name the ultimate "Person of the Century" in the final issue of the 20th century the week of December 27. TIME is accepting nominations by letters to the editor as well as votes on time.com

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CLOSES PROBE IN BEHEADING

ROANOKE, Va. (AP)—The Justice Department said Tuesday it is satisfied with the life sentences for two white men who burned and beheaded a black man and won't bring a civil rights case against them. Garnett P. Johnson Jr. was doused with gasoline and set on fire in 1997 after Louis Ceparano and Emmett Cressell dragged him outside a trailer where the three had been drinking. The charred corpse of the 40-year-old former Marine was then decapitated with an ax. The slaying outraged black leaders across the country and prompted a Justice Department investigation. Bill Lann Lee, an assistant U.S. attorney general, said the agency is "satisfied that the federal interest in the case has been vindicated through the state's successful prosecution." Cressell was convicted last year of murder. Ceparano pleaded guilty.

Michigan to begin welfare drug testing

LANSING, Mich. (AP)—Welfare applicants in three areas of Michigan will be required to take drug tests before receiving benefits under a new state law that takes effect this fall.

The pilot program to begin Oct. 1 is believed to be the first in the nation to require drug tests of all applicants at specified welfare offices, said Bill Kordenbrock, an official with the state Family Independence Agency, which administers welfare benefits.

The testing is needed to make sure drug use doesn't provide a stumbling block to moving off welfare, said Gov. John Engler, who signed the bill into law Wednesday.

"For some ... substance abuse remains a barrier to independence," he said. "This program will help us identify these individuals and provide them with the incentive to change their lives."

Under the plan, Michigan will use Medicaid funds to provide treatment for those

who screen positive for drugs. Anyone refusing treatment will face at least a partial loss of welfare benefits, and applicants who refuse to take the test will have their benefits denied.

Officials have not determined which areas of the state will take part.

Civil liberties groups and welfare advocates have said across-the-board drug testing of anyone who applies for welfare unfairly discriminates against the poor.

"If Governor Engler was truly concerned about making sure welfare applicants could get jobs, he would also be looking at factors such as alcohol abuse, and literacy and homelessness," said Wendy Wagenheim of the American Civil Liberties Union in Michigan. "This is just one, and it's strictly punitive."

The new law requires drug tests to be given to welfare applicants statewide beginning April 1, 2003.

Murder charges filed in Chicago's Ryan Harris case

Leslie Jones McCloud
The Chicago Defender

After a stalled nine-month investigation, murder charges have been filed against Cook County Jail inmate Floyd Durr in the 1998 July slaying of 11-year-old Ryan Harris. According to a state's attorney spokesman, Durr is also charged with the sexual attacks of three other pre-teen Englewood girls.

Durr, 29, had been a suspect since he admitted that he performed a sexual act on Harris' body before it was found, but he says he did not kill her. He was being held without bond on sexual assault charges involving three young girls in Englewood, ages 10, 11 and 14, according to defense attorneys in the case. Court documents revealed the 11-

year-old was a playmate of Harris' and the 10-year-old was raped at gunpoint. It was also documented that all of the incidents took place within a four- to five-block radius of where Harris' body was found and that semen found on Harris' underwear belongs to Durr.

Sabrina Harris, Ryan's mother, had expressed frustration with what she saw as a lack of action by the state's attorney. Now says she is pleased with the charges because she believes Durr killed her daughter.

Steve Decker, Harris' attorney, said his client was "emotionally drained" and "charges against Durr are what she wanted."

"Now that Durr has been charged, we believe that state's attorney should be

capable of prosecuting the case," Decker said. But, he acknowledged "inappropriate questioning by detectives involved in the case" and that circumstances surrounding the initial arrest of young boys in the case were "unheard of before."

Harris was reported missing July 27, 1998 in the Englewood community where she was temporarily staying with her godmother. Her body was found in a weed-choked vacant lot the next day. The case gained national attention last summer when prosecutors initially charged two African-American boys, aged 7 and 8, with murder.

They allegedly confessed to hitting Harris in the head with a rock as she rode her bike and then dragged her

into some bushes. The charges were withdrawn on Sept. 4 after semen, which was linked by DNA testing to Durr, was found on Ryan's undergarments.

Residents contended the boys were framed by overzealous detectives and criticized police for questioning them without parental supervision.

Defense attorneys for the young boys, Andre Grant and Retired Appellate Judge R. Eugene Pincham, have since filed a civil lawsuit against the Chicago Police Department, charging it with illegal arrest and attributing false statements to their clients.

Harris, a straight-A student, was spending the summer in Englewood at the time of her death.

Second dragging death trial to stay in Jasper

JASPER, Texas (AP)—A judge refused last week to move the trial of a second defendant in the dragging death of a black man.

State District Judge Monte Lawlis ruled that Lawrence Russell Brewer, 32, can be treated fairly by Jasper County jurors.

Brewer's trial is scheduled to begin May 17 in the same courthouse where another defendant, John William King, was convicted in February of murdering James

Byrd Jr. King received the death penalty for taking part in the murder of Byrd, 49, who was dragged from a truck for nearly three miles in June.

Brewer's lawyers contended intense publicity surrounding Byrd's slaying and King's trial had tainted the potential jury pool. Defense attorney Doug Barlow also cited several statements by Jasper-area residents who expressed satisfaction when King was

convicted.

Lawlis issued his ruling without comment.

A trial date for a third defendant, Shawn Allen Berry, 24, has not been set.

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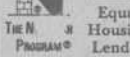
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