

WLV Cyberspace center celebrates grand opening

Tanya Dotson
Sentinel-Voice

Harrison International Resource (H.I.R.) Express held their grand opening Monday.

Located at 1830 N. Martin Luther King Boulevard in Suite No. 111B of the D&J Plaza, H.I.R. Express is a for profit group who's sole purpose is to teach computer skills, provide computer equipment and create more opportunities for young, inner-city people to work in technological environments.

The group offers GED

courses, classes in math, history, english, workshops, video games and access to computer labs and the internet. Karaoke services are also available for children to perform and record their own CDs. H.I.R. also provides tutorial classes for U.S citizenship.

H.I.R. Administrator Cecile Vereen said, "We need to prepare our people for the 21st century." According to Vereen, one way that H.I.R. Express intends to do that is to work with local businesses to provide their employees

with computer training.

Mark Harrison, owner and founder of the center, said, "Parents should really consider bringing their children here because we want to offer them more opportunities. We welcome everybody from all communities. The goal is to keep kids in school. We feel they are lost in the system and want to help them find other ways to excel in life."

Classes for the services provided by H.I.R. Express will begin in early September. Those interested may enroll



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Pointing out some computer shortcuts, Mark Harrison, manager of the Harrison International Resource Express, gives some assistance to Lashae Thomas, left, and sister Jayla at the new cyberspace service store.

by contacting Mark Harrison or Cecile Vereen at 636-1633.

Online racial divide continues to grow

WASHINGTON (AP)— The disparity on the Internet between whites and blacks and Hispanic Americans is growing toward a "racial ravine," in many cases even after accounting for differences in income, a new government report said earlier this month.

The Commerce Department's latest survey, "Falling Through the Net," showed dramatic gains in the number of Americans who own computers and use the Internet. But it also cited money; education and whether a person lives in an urban area as key factors affecting whether they use technology.

"The Net is increasingly becoming part of our national

heritage - for some people," said Larry Irving, a Commerce undersecretary and President Clinton's top telecommunications adviser.

Most troubling for government experts were indications these disparities can't be blamed solely on differences in income. Among families earning \$15,000 to \$35,000, for example, more than 33 percent of whites owned computers, but only 19 percent of blacks did — and that gap has widened nearly 62 percent since 1994 despite plunging computer prices.

"Even when holding income constant, there is still a yawning divide among different races and origins," the report said, warning of a

society in which "the 'haves' have only become more information-rich... while the 'have-nots' are lagging even further behind."

Sheila Ruffin of Columbia, Mo., who is black, bought a computer for her family two months ago because she believed her four daughters needed Internet access to succeed in school. But the costs were steep: her new computer, monthly telephone charges, monthly Internet fees.

"Black children are already behind, already at a disadvantage," Mrs. Ruffin said. "If everyone else is on the Internet, getting an advantage, then black children need access... (But) I don't see many black parents

understanding the importance of it. They have other things more important on their minds."

The government survey also found, predictably, that as income rises, the likelihood of PC ownership and Internet use also rises. Families with incomes above \$75,000 were more than five times as likely to own a computer at home and 10 times more likely to have Internet access than families who earned less than \$10,000.

And the gaps in computer ownership and Internet use narrowed between white families and blacks and Hispanics earning more than \$50,000.

"There is a way to buy (See Online, Page 4)

Poll: Many OK with racial separation

WASHINGTON (AP)— About half the young adults in a recent poll said racial separation in America is all right "as long as everyone has equal opportunity."

The poll released Monday in Washington by Hamilton College of Clinton, N.Y., found 50 percent of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement: "It's OK if the races are basically separate from one another as long as everyone has equal opportunities."

At the same time, 47 percent of those polled disagreed strongly or somewhat with the statement.

The poll, co-sponsored by the NAACP and Zogby International, surveyed 1001 randomly selected people ages 18 to 29 over one week in April and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Among other poll findings:

- Some 56 percent said the federal government should make sure black people receive fair treatment in jobs.
- About 57 percent agreed that generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.
- Some 54 percent said it was unlikely the United States would elect a black president in the near future.

DBEs

(Continued from Page 1)

established should be based on ready, willing and able businesses," said Cynthia Cicero, DBE liaison for McCarran. "We are counting businesses who are certified DBEs in different areas... In particular, this year, we have 337 DBEs with the proper licensing out of a total of 6000 firms. That means that DBEs make up 5 and a half percent of the total. That, in turn, is our DBE goal."

McCarran, for the past three fiscal years has awarded, \$2.2 million of \$17,521,804 to DBEs, 12.6 percent of the total federally assisted projects. Most of the federal dollars go toward Airport Improvement Programs and are used for runway expansion.

NDOT received between \$175 and 180 million, according to Roc Stacey, NDOT's acting manager. \$1.3 million went to officially designated DBEs and \$3 million went to DBE qualified companies. He said that he had a pool of 280 DBE firms to choose from this year. Rather than a 10 percent goal, NDOT has established a 5.68 percent goal.

NDOT is conducting an informational meeting today at 6 p.m. in the training room of the NDOT District One headquarters, 123 E. Washington Avenue. They will brief the public on their new goals and take input for changes.

RTC has fared much worse than both McCarran and NDOT in attracting DBE firms.

For the last fiscal year, July of 1998 until June of 1999, they reported awarding one contract to a certified DBE, spending \$7,497 of a total federal allocation of \$2,478,110.

"We haven't done well in the past," Stan Wilkerson, marketing manager for RTC. "But we have made every good

(See DBEs, Page 20)

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