

Reverend urges clergy to join HIV/AIDS fight

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Rev. Jesse Jackson is encouraging the nation's clergy to bound together and tackle the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The faith-based coalition, in which some ministers were tested publicly for the HIV virus, is to be used to spread the prevention message.

"The church is the cornerstone of our existence," Jackson said. "As we grapple with the devastation of HIV dis-

ease, we must also grapple with its spiritual destruction. Many individuals are looking to men and women of God for guidance and support, nurturing and understanding. As a minister, I believe that all men of God should use their influence to persuade people that they must be tested for HIV."

Some 50 ministers were tested for HIV in Chicago June 3. The ministers will relate stories of their experi-

ence to their congregations. The testing initiative reaches its zenith on June 27, National HIV Testing Day, which coincides with the Know Your Status, Get Tested campaign.

"The purpose for this HIV testing event is to end the obscurity of silence and replace it with hope," Jackson said.

"As spiritual leaders, we have a duty to lead by example. The African-Ameri-

can community and other communities are not looking to celebrities for guidance on this issue, they are looking to us.

"I will no longer accept the fact that 57 percent of all new diagnosed cases of HIV disease are African-American," Jackson said.

"AIDS is the leading cause of death of African-American men between the age of 23-44 and the second leading cause of death of Black

women in that age group. Nor will I accept the facts that at least one-half of all new HIV infections are estimated to be among people of color under the age of 25. To adjust to such devastating current realities is to contradict the sanctity of life.

"We know that HIV is the cause of AIDS," Jackson said. "We are clear on the routes of transmission, and we know that early intervention begins with knowing your status.

Once we know our status, we can then access care, seek treatment, advocate for the necessary resources needed and have long and productive lives.

The movement is in response to a surge in HIV/AIDS infection rates nationally in minority communities. According to a 1999 Centers for Disease Control study, African-Americans and Latinos comprise 67 percent of U.S. AIDS cases.

Dogcatchers to unite in spirit of family

John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

1940 N. J. St.

The first annual Dogcatchers Family Reunion begins at noon and will feature free food, games and music.

The Dogcatchers Youth Foundation will celebrate nearly 20 years of youth outreach Saturday, June 17 at Doolittle Community Center,

"If everyone shows up, I'm expecting at least 10,000

people," said Henry D. Thorns, founder and president of the youth group. "At our family reunion banquet we had over 3,500 people."

Thorns founded the group in 1982. He was too short to play community basketball and wanted his own team. He viewed the group as an outlet for neighborhood children.

"Our organization began because I noticed too many kids involved in drugs and violence and not going to school," Thorns said. "In our neighborhood you have to give them (youth) something to do — we give them sports — sports is something to do while they finish their education."

Offered are basketball, football, baseball and soccer. Thorns promises to link members interested in other sports with a representative of that sport they don't offer.

"I like for everyone to pick their players — leave me with

the leftovers," said Thorns, an ex-car salesman and father of five.

"I want the leftovers. I love the leftovers and I'll beat you with them — the leftovers."

The group also helps members with homework, conducts after-school programs and offers computer training. Thorns would like to get a building from which to run the group.

Thorns, who's in a legal battle with his former employer, said finding funding is a challenge. He gets \$5,000 from North Las Vegas, \$15,000 from Clark County and \$20,000 from the city of Las Vegas each year.

"That is not enough," said Thorns. His programs recruits children from ages 5 to 17, regardless of their race or financial background. "We are still looking for outside sponsors." Those interested can call 399-5809.

Jackson finishes master's work after three decades

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The Rev. Jesse Jackson recently completed a 35-year educational sojourn on Saturday by earning his master's degree from Chicago's Theological Seminary.

Seminary faculty reviewed Jackson's work and achievements over the past 35 years and decided he had satisfied the requirements of the master of divinity program and recommended to president Susan B. Thistlethwaite that he be granted the degree.

"With his remarkable accomplishments in the areas in which the degree program focuses — for example, preaching or global sensitivity — no one could doubt that (the) Rev. Jackson has completed these credits," Thistlethwaite said. As a student at the seminary, Jackson was exposed to the ideas of church transformation and motivated to examine the role of the church in shaping public policy and transforming society. Among other activities, he organized the Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization. The Rev. Martin Luther King wanted Jackson to serve as the regional director of his Operation Breadbasket, an organization dedicated to improving the economic state of the Black community.

"I am deeply touched by the reception that Chicago Theological Seminary has given by including me in the class of 2000," Jackson said days before the commencement at Hyde Park Union Church. "This institution connected me to the great theologians, such as Neibuhr and Tillich and solidified my belief that if we try, we can each make a difference."

Lewis

(Continued from Page 1)

Oakley, whom Lewis had met only a few times, told him he didn't stab anyone.

Sweeting and Oakley are charged with murder and assault in the stabbings of Jacinth Baker and Richard Lollar. They face up to life in prison if convicted.

Murder and assault charges against Lewis were dropped Monday after he pleaded guilty to obstruction of justice and agreed to testify about what he saw.

"I never did anything," Lewis said after leaving court. "I was nothing in this whole case but a witness the whole time. And what I just said today is to prove to the world that I've always been a witness." When asked whether Lewis' testimony was going to hurt the remaining defendants, Lewis' lawyer Ed Garland said, "I think it both hurt and helped them. ... It was a mixed bag."

The Baltimore Ravens linebacker testified that he left the Cobalt nightclub with his friends around 4 a.m. when Oakley got into an argument with a group of men. Lewis said he tried to break up the argument by taking Oakley back to his limousine.

"Reginald was the aggressor at the time that I was walking up," Lewis said. "He was really hostile toward the other two guys."

A few moments later, the group of men walked past Lewis' limousine and then turned around and came back. Oakley jumped out of the limousine, and one of the victims, Jacinth Baker, smacked him in the head with a champagne bottle. "Honestly, all hell broke loose from that point," Lewis said.

Sweeting tried to help Oakley, but never made it because two men attacked him and dragged him behind a tree, Lewis said. Then he saw Sweeting regain his footing and start throwing punches and fighting back.

Lewis said he saw Oakley and another member of Lewis' group, Carlos Stafford, fighting with Baker. He said Oakley punched Baker four or five times in the chest while Stafford was kicking him.

"That was a frantic fight," Lewis said. "They were really going at it."

In his opening statements, prosecutor Paul Howard told jurors that both victims were stabbed several times in the chest. He told jurors the killers held their knives in their fists and delivered the death blows in a punching motion, so witnesses could not see the weapons.

Lewis admitted obstructing the investigation by telling his party to keep quiet and then giving a false statement to police. The 25-year-old Lewis will serve a year's probation under Georgia's first offender law. His record could be cleared if he successfully completes his sentence. During probation, he must remain employed and not use drugs or alcohol. Lewis will also pay one-third of the prosecution's court costs. The NFL said he won't be suspended but could be fined.

CLASSROOM Crisis!

Teachers just received a cost of living increase. This increase came after an arbitrator determined the school district could afford it.

Now the school board is threatening to:

- ☞ Increase class size
- ☞ Reduce student services and supplies
- ☞ Reduce or eliminate professional development

Added to the current problems:

- ☞ Lack of supplies
- ☞ 200 classrooms without permanent teachers
- ☞ 2000 new teachers needed
- ☞ Terribly overcrowded classrooms
- ☞ Discipline problems

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