

## NEWS BRIEFS

### MUSEUM BEGINS MONTH-LONG TRIBUTE TO HOLIDAY SEASON

The Clark County Museum kicked off the holiday season last week with the opening of Hometown Holiday, a wonderland of one million lights set in decorative holiday displays throughout the museum. Hometown Holiday is set to run to Christmas eve. Children can take pictures with Santa Claus, Frosty the Snowman and Rudolph the red-nose reindeer. Other activities include face painting and playing with trinkets. Admission is \$3 for people 16 and older \$2 for children. Proceeds from the gate admission will go to Shade Tree shelter for homeless and abuse women and their families. Hometown Holiday is open daily from 6 to 10 p.m. The museum is located at 1830 S. Boulder Highway. Those interested in volunteering or wanting more information can call 257-9099 or 807-9595 or can visit the web site at [www.hometownholiday.com](http://www.hometownholiday.com).

### BALTIMORE NAACP BRANCH ELECTION SUSPENDED

Nelson B. Rivers, national director of branch and field services for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, has ordered a suspension of the Baltimore City branch election of new officers, including the president, pending an investigation by the national office. Rivers, who oversees operation of the NAACP's 1,700 branches, said an initial review of the election procedures indicated there are "serious questions" surrounding the decision by Branch officials to omit the names of Larry Young and others from the ballot. Young became a candidate for branch president in October, but he did not learn his name would not be on the election ballot until the election started today. He was running against incumbent president, G.I. Johnson, for a two-year term as branch leader. Under the rules of the NAACP's constitution, the national office has the authority to intervene in Branch election when there is evidence of possible violation of the association's rules and regulations governing the election of officers. Rivers said that following a full investigation; the national NAACP office would oversee a new election, possibly within 20 days.

### UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN TO DEFEND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

DETROIT (AP)—In a case that may be headed for the Supreme Court, the University of Michigan is trying to preserve affirmative action in admissions by arguing that to get a good education, students need to be exposed to people of other races and ethnic groups. The university's admission policies are under attack in two lawsuits brought by the Washington-based Center for Individual Rights, a conservative legal group that brought down affirmative action at the University of Texas law school in 1996. The organization is suing on behalf of white students denied admission to Michigan. The 3-year-old case is being closely watched across the country because many colleges and universities take race and ethnicity into consideration in admissions. A Supreme Court ruling against Michigan could jeopardize those practices. U.S. District Judge Patrick Duggan plans to decide as early as this week whether to issue a ruling without a trial in one of the lawsuits, a challenge to the school's undergraduate admissions policies. A second lawsuit against the university's law school admissions policies is scheduled to go to trial in January before a different judge. Michigan has spent \$4.3 million defending affirmative action, saying it has a right to use race, does so fairly and legally and would see the color drain out of its student body if race were ignored. Diversity "goes to the heart of our ability to fulfill our educational mission," said Elizabeth Barry, associate vice president and deputy general counsel. The university began a large-scale push for diversity in 1987, doubling minority enrollment in the decade that followed. As late as 1997, Michigan used a grid that sorted applicants by grades, test scores and race. Now, the university grades applicants on a 150-point scale. Blacks, Hispanics or American Indians get 20 points for their race — equal to raising their grade-point average a full point on a 4-point scale. Of Michigan's 38,000 undergraduate and graduate students, about 13 percent are "underrepresented minorities" — 7.8 percent black, 4.3 percent Hispanic and six-tenths of a percent American Indian.

## Clinton signs minority health bill

WASHINGTON (AP)— President Clinton on Wednesday signed into law a bill establishing a center at the National Institutes of Health to study health disparities among the nation's minority populations. The National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities will coordinate research to identify areas where NIH studies into minority health problems are insufficient.

"It is unacceptable that African-American men have a higher overall cancer incidence and infant mortality rates than any other racial or ethnic group; Hispanic and

Native Americans suffer much greater rates of diabetes and Asian American and Pacific Islanders are afflicted with extraordinary high levels of cancer of the liver," Clinton said.

The law authorizes more than \$150 million for the new center, increases funding for research on race and health disparities at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and creates a new program to attract health disparity researchers.

The president also signed bills:

-To allow American prosecution of U.S. citizens con-

nected to the military who commit crimes that are not pursued by the host country or are outside the jurisdiction of military courts. It also establishes federal criminal jurisdiction over crimes committed abroad by military personnel who leave the service and are no longer subject to military control.

-To make airport personnel face tougher background checks. Under the new law, all airport screeners and those with access to secure areas would be required to undergo a criminal history record check starting one year after the bill's enactment. The list

of crimes that would disqualify potential screeners would be expanded to include, among others, burglary, fraud and felony drug convictions.

-To provide \$5 million over five years to help law enforcement and federal agencies protect and inform the elderly of fraudulent telemarketing and investment schemes. It also creates a clearinghouse to keep track of complaints made about telemarketing companies and requires that crimes against seniors be included in the nation's annual crime victims survey.

## Judge: New York officer's rights violated

NEW YORK (AP)— A federal judge ruled that the First Amendment rights of a veteran police officer who wore disguises as she publicly criticized the police department were violated when she was fired.

The city says it fired Yvette Walton, 39, because of insubordination and violating departmental orders regulating sick leave.

But a judge concluded Monday that the department would not have dismissed Walton last year if she had not criticized it after the Feb.

4, 1999, shooting of Amadou Diallo, who died after being shot 41 times by police officers.

Walton had worn disguises or had her voice electronically altered as she criticized the department at a news conference, on a national television program and at a City Council meeting in early 1999.

Walton, the only black woman assigned to street patrols when she joined the newly created Street Crime Unit in 1993, was moved out of the unit in 1995 after she

concluded that it engaged in racially discriminatory practices and targeted minorities in illegal searches and seizures.

U.S. District Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein said in his written ruling that Walton's disguises, which included a black leather jacket, a heavy gray hood, dark glasses and a scarf across her face, did not shield her from the wrath of her bosses. Hellerstein said the Police Department knew it was Walton who had criticized the agency at a Feb. 14 news conference conducted

by the 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement organization.

"The Police Department's denial of this knowledge is not credible," the judge wrote. He concluded that her dismissal was in retaliation for the exercise of her First Amendment rights.

Lorna Goodman, a city spokeswoman, said the ruling would be appealed.

"This woman had in fact been dismissed, given a second chance and then abused her sick leave privileges, which is the reason she was finally terminated."

## Urban League award dinner raises \$1.2 million

### Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON, D.C.— It was the premiere event in November 1957—a gathering of Urban Leaguers honoring stalwarts in the civil rights movement. James P. Mitchell, Former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor and Jacob S. Potofsky, former president of Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, were the inaugural honorees.

Forty-three years later, the National Urban League still honors civic and business leaders who have made an impact in their communities through its Annual Equal Opportunity Day Awards Dinner.

More than 900 people—politicians, business leaders, civic and religious leaders—gathered at New York's Chelsea Piers' Pier Sixty for

the first Annual Dinner of the 21st century.

In his remarks, National Urban League President Hugh B. Price told the crowd: "America is a better country, a stronger country, a more just and inclusive country because of this amazing Urban League movement."

"We are the movement that is rooted deeply in our community working day in and day out, lights on from dawn to dusk from Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to Main Street from the corner barber shop to the corners of power securing economic self-reliance, economic parity and economic power for African-Americans—that is the mission of the Urban League movement for the 21st century."

Later, John Thain, president and co-chief operating

officer of Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. and this year's dinner chairman, announced that this year's EOD Awards Dinner raised \$2.1 million to benefit the Urban League in its commitment of helping African Americans in the 21st century.

Roz Abrams, anchor of New York's "Eyewitness News" on WABC-TV, was this year's mistress of ceremonies as awards were pre-

sented to the following:

Merrill Lynch & Co.: The Corporate Leadership Award for their trailblazing efforts in creating an environment that fosters equal opportunity among society's diverse cultures, while providing the catalyst for personal and professional achievement, as evidenced by their Scholarship Builder program. David H. Komansky, chairman of the (See *Urban League*, Pg 15)



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