

Gene Collins tabbed to head Sharpton's group

By Nancy Watson
Sentinel-Voice

The Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network is coming to Las Vegas.

Three members of the New York-based civil rights group were in town last week to formally announce that the NAN will open an office within the next 30 days and that Gene Collins will be in charge of the NAN's Las Vegas operations.

The NAN chose to come to Las Vegas after Collins contacted them, said Doniece Blackwell, one of the NAN representatives in town last week. The organization chose Collins as president of their



GENE COLLINS

Las Vegas operation after reviewing his resume, Collins said.

Collins was president of the Las Vegas Branch of NAACP when the branch's charter was suspended by

NAACP's Board of Directors.

The NAACP is in the process of rebuilding the Las Vegas Branch.

Collins, however, is not a part of that process.

Instead, he is suing the national office for not following due process set forth in its own constitution when it suspended the branch and all of the officers, he said. He also alleges that the branch lost its charter because the MGM Grand Hotel wanted to silence him.

At the time, Collins was negotiating with the MGM for \$100 million for infrastructure in West Las Vegas.

Instead of working with him and the local chapter, he alleges that the MGM made a sizable donation to the national office to circumvent or silence him.

"If there were problems, why didn't they put in writing. Why didn't they give us a chance. Why didn't we get our day in court?" he said during an interview Monday.

"We sent them over \$50,000. The membership we started off with was 400 and something, it rose to 900 in 1999. It was at 2,000 when they ousted us," he said.

Regardless of the outcome of the lawsuit, Collins will no longer be involved with



REV. AL SHARPTON

NAACP. "Not after you've been betrayed by the people at the top of the organization," he said.

Now Collins has the Rev. Sharpton and his organization behind him and he is

going after the \$100 million again. It is money that is due West Las Vegas for two reasons, he said.

One, the MGM has not made an effort to hire blacks, and blacks spend \$2 billion a year in the establishment. Second, the MGM made a \$50 million contribution to the city of Detroit where it has a casino.

"This is our home, this is the gaming mecca of the world, if you can go into an area and spend \$50 million to build infrastructure what about this community where we spend approximately \$2 billion a year and not one

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Forum to target academic achievement of black students

By Al Triche
Sentinel-Voice

Relentlessly criticizing school policies it finds unsatisfactory, the Westside Alliance Action Korps- Uplifting People (W.A.A.K.-U.P.) takes its case to the public this weekend. On Saturday, at 9:30 a.m., the grassroots organization will conduct a "Community Strategic Meeting" at the West Las Vegas Library, 951 West Lake Mead Boulevard.

Organizers say it is for those "not satisfied" with the academic achievement of

African-American students in the district.

The meeting is for those alarmed by the numbers of black students in alternative and special education here, and for others who believe selection of students to attend the district's so-called "magnet" schools has been unfair. Still others, upset by CCSD's decision to place Charles I. West Middle School under management by a private firm, are being urged to attend as well.

W.A.A.K.-U.P.'s complaints about C. I. West will

include its poor academic performance and the logistics of transporting students to the school, as well as the group's displeasure with its administrators.

According to the group's president, Marzette Lewis, West's student body represents children who have come from as many as 50 different elementary schools, a circumstance she considers counterproductive to the kind of socialization that should occur at a neighborhood school. "Anytime you have this many elementary schools and

you're forced to bus children in from all over the place," said Lewis, "the tragedy is that the children don't know each other."

W.A.A.K.-U.P. is expected to discuss the administration of West Principal Karen Williams, including faculty and staff changes she has made. Lewis has called Williams' behavior toward students and parents "crude," and has accused her of "inappropriate remarks about students."

Lewis went on the attack earlier this year, infuriated

when CCSD placed seven of its poorest-performing schools, including West, under the direction of Edison Schools, the nation's largest private manager of public schools.

"They brought in Edison without any input from the community," she said angrily, and revealed that she has obtained, from published reports and from people familiar with the firm, indications that Edison's record of saving failing schools is not as impressive as CCSD led the public to believe. Lewis promised

to share her findings at Saturday's meeting.

W.A.A.K.-U.P. will charge that in most urban areas where Edison has "set up housekeeping," as Lewis puts it, the results for African-American students have not been good.

The group will also focus attention on another category of students it feels are at great risk.

"We found that 65 percent of all Special Ed students are African-American," said Lewis, "but we're only

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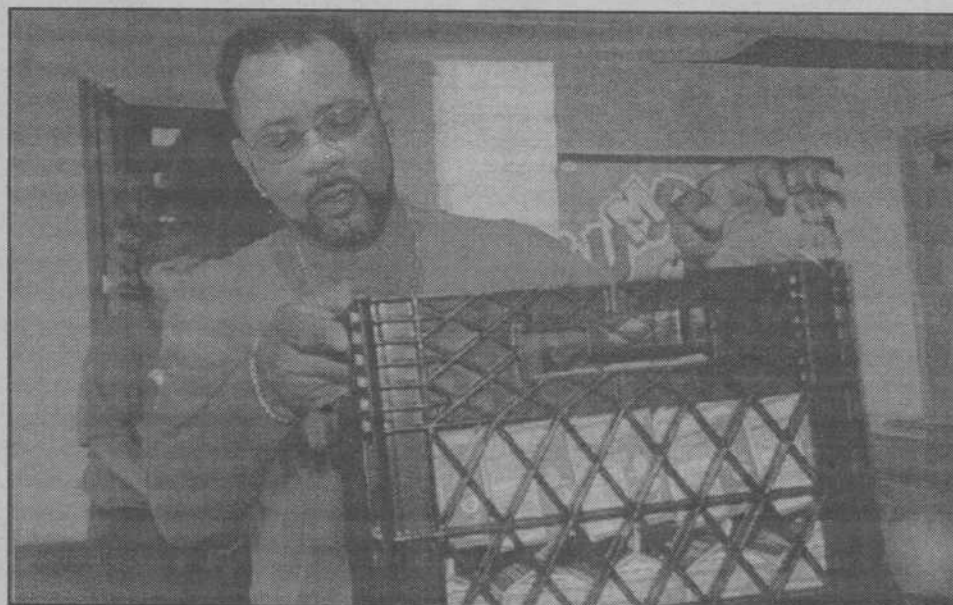
Disabled vehicle puts food service for needy kids at risk

By Al Triche
Sentinel-Voice

For several years, Toni and Clifton Mims have worked with federal and state Departments of Education to develop food programs for disadvantaged children in Las Vegas and North Las Vegas. Their nonprofit Jumpstart Nutrition and Childcare Organization, 1111 N. Nellis, operates multiple serving sites and distributes tens of thousands of meals each month.

But mechanical problems with a service vehicle, the lynchpin to their distribution capability, have become unmanageable, and, says Jumpstart's director, may force her "to shut the program down." In the meantime, she says: "We've gone to a lot of car lots."

Ultimately, the organization wants to provide Clark County's "at-risk" children 18 years old and younger with "nutritious meals daily, even on Saturday and Sunday." An overview of the program indicates Jumpstart's



Vehicle problems threaten to halt Jumpstart, the nonprofit food delivery service. Clifton Mims pitches in to provide thousands of meals to disadvantaged children across the valley.

numerous primary serving sites and snack service locations "currently feed 70,000—92,000 meals per month."

"We're funded by the Department of Education," Executive Director Toni Mims explained, "but that only covers about 70 percent of our operating costs. We also apply for various grants to cover the rest." However, none of that covers the kind of expense they've incurred now.

Less than two years ago, Jumpstart purchased a 14-foot refrigerated truck that, in retrospect, Mims calls "a lemon." Since then the vehicle has become the program's Achilles' heel.

"It only cost \$15,000," said Mims, "but we're still making payments. We've probably put about 60,000 miles on it, between 250 and 300 miles a day," she said, adding that problems with the truck began early.

"We've put over \$6,000 in it since we've had

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Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy