

Nursing group offers a look into its profession

By John T Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

An African-American nursing association will host a day-long forum to reveal the trials and tribulations of the profession as well as challenges of the future. Southern Nevada Black Nurses Association, Inc. (SNBNA) presents "Nurses Under Pressure" from 8 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. at the Suncoast Hotel & Casino, 9090 Alta Drive, on Saturday, Oct. 20.

"People will be enlightened about the profession of nursing," said Debra Toney, founder and past president of SNBNA. "Nurses are with the patient 24 hours a day- we're the closest to the patient."

Techniques for managing careers, continuing education units, protecting legal rights, and job-related stress in the nursing field will be topics of discussion.

"We have a national shortage of nurses in the USA," Toney said. "The state of Nevada is 50th, ranked in terms of shortage of nurses and long hours."

Guest speakers for the



DR. LINDA BOLTON

event are: Dee Hicks, RN, MSN, CNO; Sherrie Emm, J.D.; Dr. Papa Huluhazu, Ed.D, CMT, S.P.; Nancy Pullum, RN and clinical nurse; and Mr. Terrance Allen, Branch Manager, Global Staffing Management Services.

Dr. Linda Burnes Bolton, vice-president and chief nursing officer at Cedar-Sinai Health System in Los Angeles will be the keynote speaker.

SNBNA, Inc. is a chapter of the National Black Nurses Association, which has 78

chapters nationwide with approximately 150,000 thousand members. The local chapter has been around since 1996 and has 25 members.

"We have a mentoring program that reaches out to the youth," said Toney, who wants to see more young people choose the nursing career path. "We continue to build healthcare facilities and there are not enough nurses entering the profession. The average age of a nurse is 43-44 years old."

With the recent heightened alert of terrorist retaliation for attacks on the Taliban in Afghanistan, the medical community has been preparing and bracing itself for an anthrax and/or biological attack.

"I think so," said Toney, when asked if southern Nevada was ready for any biological attacks. "It's been published- a lot of information has been distributed- and the health department is to be contacted for any unusual illnesses or a wave of sick people with the same unusual symptoms."

Washington

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would have graduated. To do that, he worked the graveyard shift at Caesar's Palace as a busboy, attended a night class and studied for the exam.

Then he was drafted.

Although his military life did not pass unblemished, due to a fight he took part in, he did earn an honorable discharge and came back to Las Vegas. He brought carpenter's skills with him from the Army but worked again in a kitchen on the strip before running into Dorothy Smith, who was the Human Resources Director for the City of Las Vegas.

He went to the office to apply for a carpenter's position. She took him into her office and talked to him about the fire service.

"I stumbled into it," he said, "and I've been blessed ever since."

Washington has spent the past 26 years working for the Las Vegas Fire Department. He spent three years as a firefighter before transferring to the inside and working on "the staff side of the house."

He describes himself as a man of average intelligence whose life is kept in balance by his wife and his children.

Washington seems undaunted by the task of running a fire department with 560 employees and managing an annual budget of \$58 million. He has trained himself through the years with leadership courses for the fire service and also has earned an Associate of Arts degree from the Community College of Southern Nevada.

His education has not ended.

"I plan to be in school next semester," he said.

His goal? A degree that will allow him to teach when he retires in three to five years.

That Washington could end up a teacher is not a surprise to those in the community who have worked with him on variety of projects.

He co-founded Camp Brotherhood and Camp Sisterhood, summer camps for disadvantaged children.

He has served on the board of directors for the United Way of Southern Nevada, Community Peace, Inc., and the African-American Advisory Committee to the Sheriff.

He has coached football teams and Little League. He likes children and wishes more people would "get down on their knees to help a child."

Numerous awards line his walls. Some of them include Community Food Bank Executive Director and Board Service Award; Community Hero Award; Gold Award, United Way of Southern Nevada; Outstanding Service and Support to Education; Phi Delta Kappa, Las Vegas; Father of the Year, Clark County Fathers Day Community, and Commitment to Service Lifetime Award, Professional Black Firefighters of Las Vegas.

Washington is Las Vegas' first black fire chief. He is also the first fire chief chosen from within the ranks of the fire department. His selection received unanimous approval of the city council.

"Dave's a neat guy. He's earned it. He worked up through the ranks and we're thrilled to have him. He's doing a great job," said Las Vegas City Manager Vir-

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