

West Las Vegas Library celebrates Black History Month

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel Voice

Kicking off the celebration of Black History Month at the West Las Vegas Library, the audience was electrified by the score of talented acts and mesmerized by the film "Unchained Memories." The theme of this year's salute to Black History Month is, "Hearts that dare . . . take nothing for their journey," promoting the contributions of African-Americans and fostering the 'Celebrate Cultural Diversity' program of the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District.

In his opening remarks, Felton Thomas, Library Branch Manager, thanked the audience for coming out and supporting the many programs sponsored by the West Las Vegas Library. He added, "What we wanted to do was to do an overview of our African-American History Month, and what we were able to do today was to give everybody a little bit of flavor that they could share with others within the community." Thomas encouraged everyone to visit the many library branches that will be sponsoring month long events.

The Master of Ceremonies for the tribute to Black History Month was Drake Collier, who shared these thoughts at the beginning of the event, "This is February 1, 2003,



Sentinel-Voice photos by Lés Pierres Streater

Among the performers were Aboubacar Camara and Abou Camara.

the beginning of Black History Month, remember the warmth, the flavor, the colors displayed, the words, actions of those on the stage reflecting on the history of African-Americans, and maybe you won't have to wait until you get as old as I am to get a new attitude, and see the whole picture about Black History Month." Collier went on to announce the series of events surrounding the kickoff, including a

reception for artist Thaddeus Foster following the program. Foster will be showcasing many of his art works throughout the month of February at various libraries including the West Las Vegas branch, and the Sahara West branch.

The event showcased a number of talented acts beginning with a musical interlude featuring Don & Alice Cunningham performing a Jazz ensemble. That was followed

by a tribute to West African culture through drum interludes by Aboubacar Camara and Abou Camara of Africa Bote.

A small rendition of the play, "The Emperor Jones," the story of a Pullman porter who escapes from a chaingang and improbably becomes

Emperor of a Caribbean Island, was enacted by members Ronn L. Williams, Jr., Lyle E. Fisher, and Lydia Harris, under the direction of Walter Mason. Sharing laughter through comedy, an excerpt from the skit 'Gossip' was performed by China Hudson, and providing some soulful rhythm and blues selections, trumpeter Skip Martin moved the audience.

Jani Jeppe, who coordinated the A.A.H.M. commented about her impressions on the event, "I thought that it was really wonderful, I'm thankful for the talent that was offered this evening, a mixture of our art, culture, and history was a wonderful balance starting off the celebration of Black History Month." She added that the talents at the kickoff

event will be displayed throughout the month, and encourages everyone to contact their neighborhood branch library, or go on-line at www.lvccld.org to get a listing of all the events, including the dates and time when the events will occur.



China Hudson performed "Gossip" well, from voice to mannerisms.

Blacks mark 30 years of soul on skis

By Marcus E. Walton
Special to Sentinel-Voice

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (NNPA)—Many people scoff at the idea of African-Americans barreling down a mountainside on skis.

Snowboarding has been a popular "alternative" winter sport among African-American youth.

"I get it all the time," says Sharon Sargeant, president of the Ebony Ski and Racquet Club, based in Sacramento. "'You're going to break a leg' or 'We don't ski.' But it makes it worth it when it's us. It's like you see yourself on those skis. Especially when you see all those little kids—it makes me feel good."

Sargeant, who has been skiing for 10 years, says that the coalition of Black clubs that form the National Brotherhood of Skiers do like to have a good time, as illustrated by the consistently high turnout for their events. In fact, Sargeant said she met her husband, Desmond, through the club. But members also have a higher purpose in mind.

NBS, with more than 80 clubs in 75 cities, is celebrating its 30th year at Whistler-Blackcomb, Canada, from Feb. 1-8. One of the objectives of the organization is to also develop African-American winter sports athletes in events such as skiing and snowboarding, with the eventual goal of seeing those athletes win a medal in the Winter Olympics, said NBS spokeswoman Leslie Jones.

"There are people who know NBS for their events, but people who participate a bit longer know that it's so much more than a social group," Jones said.

One of the athletes that NBS supports is Errol Kerr, a 15-year-old Truckee resident. Kerr, a 10th grader at Truckee Meadows Academy, is ranked No. 1 in his age group for downhill racing in the United States. Among

his goals are competing in the World Cup and finishing in the top three at the Winter Olympics someday.

"We're doing all this for people like him," Sargeant said.

Kerr is just one member of Team NBS, which skis competitively throughout the country.

Black folks aren't just making waves in the traditional skiing circles, they also are carving a niche into the "alternative" winter sports, like snowboarding.

"It's very popular with the youth and some of our regions have a snowboard coach and youth director, the same as events like the downhill and slalom," Jones said.

But despite their mission to identify, train and support athletes of color for winter sports, Jones and Sargeant say the organization definitely knows how to have a good time.

But with all of the talk of skiing and snowboarding and winter resorts, many people get put off from even attempting to ski or snowboard, citing money as a factor. Sargeant says that it is possible to sail down the mountain without mortgaging your home.

Ebony Ski and Racquet Club often sponsors first timers and even gives ski scholarships for local children to enjoy a day at the slopes, she said.

Among the cost-cutting measures is the idea that you can spray your jeans with water repellent and use them to ski instead of buying expensive ski gear.

"Invest in a lesson," Jones said. "Don't invest in a lot of gear."

For more information about Black skiers and snowboarders or to join them at Winter Carnival 2003 or Summit 2003, go to www.nbs.org or contact a local ski club.

Marcus E. Watson writes for the Sacramento Observer.

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