

Wine taste in better digs

By John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

Wine, spirits and fine-tasting food are the norms for this annual college scholarship fundraiser, but the Ninth Annual Educational Taste of Excellence has grown so big that another venue was needed to accommodate patrons and vendors.

Last year, more than 700 guests attended. "We were packed last year," said Dr. Joni Flowers, founder and coordinator of the scholarship fundraiser that benefit students who plan to attend the Community College of Southern Nevada.

The ballroom in Palace Station Hotel, 2411 W. Sahara Ave., is the new venue. Along with wine, spirits and food, the annual scholarship fund-raiser will include live jazz on Saturday, Feb. 28 from 7-11 p.m.

Guests are asked to wear elegant attire.

"An evening of ambiance and understated elegance, the

wine tasting itself gives people the opportunity to sample wine from various vineyards," Flowers said. "(Educational Taste of Excellence) has involved into one of the premiere multicultural galas in Las Vegas. It's important for people to come out and support the educational needs of students."

Cultural enthusiasts will be delighted by all the food, wine and jazz, Flowers said. Wines and non-alcoholic specialty drinks will be sipped in special souvenir glasses. The soothing sounds of live music being performed by the Woody Woods Quartet and Jimmy Spoto.

"This year we are adding two jazz groups and increasing our number of wineries," Flowers said. Esterlina Vineyard, which was featured in the October 2003 issue of Essence magazine, will be showcased at the event. Lillian McMorris, also loved as the first lady of the com-

munity, will serve as emcee.

There will be a silent auction. Up for bid will be premiums including roundtrip airline tickets, passes to shows, dinner at some of Las Vegas' finest restaurants and greens fees at some of the most challenging golf courses in the Las Vegas Valley.

Over the years, more than a \$100,000 has been raised by this event. Scholarship recipients will be acknowledged at the event.

All proceeds will go toward funding scholarships for students.

Scholarships value range from \$1,500 to \$2,500. They are named for Rhonda Jefferson (Single Parent), Dorothy Dickerson, Senator John Glenn, Presidents' Scholarship, Caesar Chavez and the Mary Ruth Marshall Scholarship.

Tickets are \$30 in advance and \$35 at the door. No one under 21 will be admitted. For more information, call (702) 651-4440.

Fitzgeralds

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happy to be honoring Don H. Barden, the CEO and chairman of the Fitzgeralds Casinos." Later that evening, more than 200 people gathered in Fitzgeralds' showroom to meet friends, relatives and honorees, while the Gene Redden Trio and Janice Carter provided entertainment.

The next day, more than 200 students, faculty and principal of Kermit R. Booker Elementary School attempted to give their full attention to the inspirational "testimony" of mistress of ceremonies Kim Fields and Hollywood celebrities Kim Whitley, Olivia Brown, Dick Anthony Williams and Alaina Reed Hall.

Alana Barden introduced her parents, Bella and Don, to the youngsters. Jordan Adams, a gifted eight-year-old pianist, displayed his talent with an outstanding rendition of a composition by Frederic Chopin.

Perhaps the most inspirational speech came from Miss Black USA Elizabeth Muto, who as an infant was left at a Greyhound bus station by her biological parents.

She has overcome that adversity to graduate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Muto speaks four languages fluently, including Japanese. She was informed by Barden to stop by his office when she completes her reign as Miss Black USA.



A Family Affair: Fitzgeralds' owner Don Barden (fourth from left) poses with family and friends during the casino party.

Barden assisted her earlier in her quest for the title. Afterward, each student shook hands with the celebrities and the Barden family as they exited the Crown Theater in the Mall.

A concert featuring the Dazz Band, ConFunkShun and Midnight Star at the Fremont Experience Showroom had locals and visitors enjoying hip-hop, bop, funk, blues and types of music that have been associated with African-American culture for years.

On Saturday, before the inaugural Don H. Barden Achievement Awards could get underway in the 12th Floor Ballroom, outside on

the Fremont Street Experience Mall, caterers and restaurants served delicious food prepared in front of the casino. Among the Black-cooks on hand were from M&M, H&H, Rib Joint, Pat's Catfish, Tululah's and the Black Firefighters Ribs.

Entertainers included Pat Russell, UNLV Dancers, Fire, La Blaque, Adriana and various other local groups.

Gospel entertainers, the Rev. Brown, Sharon Martin, Spiritual Messengers and Voices of W.O.E., rendered spiritual offerings throughout the day's activities.

Locals receiving achievement awards were Larry

Playwright taps historical figures

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A young African-American playwright is serving up a play that inspires perseverance, builds upon human endurance and shows trials and tribulations faced by major figures in Black history.

"I Have A Dream" is a story about a close-knit family that draws closer once realizing struggles and sacrifices of their ancestors. Dancers from the world-famous Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater of Harlem will add choreography in a play that hopes to attract a family audience. Judith Jamison succeeded the late Ailey (1931-1989) as artistic director.

"I Have A Dream" is a play that was inspired by God," said Raymond Giddeons Jr., director and author. "It is a reality play of a grandmother dealing with a family crisis."

"I Have A Dream" will be staged Friday, Feb. 27 at 7 p.m. in the Clark County Library Performing Arts Theater, 1401 E. Flamingo Road. Admission is free.

The crisis for the family is the granddaughter being weighed down by personal responsibilities and wishes to unload her burdens on others. The play begins with the two different generations of women having a dialogue about the younger generation's problems in life.

Then the play turns its attention to a television screen and the performance becomes a TV program speaking on the lives of famous Black Americans and shows the granddaughter how tough they had it when they were alive.

Singer Lena Horn, civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and writer Zora Neal Hurston are just some of the characters dramatized in this play. Giddeons said he wanted variety in his play and changed characters in the play three times.

"I'm inspired by the people around me," he said. "We needed something creative that the kids would like."

The 22-year-old playwright is from Chicago and is working on his Master's Degree in social work.

He is single and works part time as a caseworker for UNLV's Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach.

The outreach center helps people obtain their GED and offers various academic services.

The "I Have a Dream" Foundation and Unity Baptist Church are co-sponsoring the production. More than 40 children and 10 adults have parts in the play.

For more information about the play and services provided by UNLV's Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach, call (702) 730-6170.

signings.

A red carpet and trumpets greeted celebrities, Trumpet Awards honorees and guests of the Barden family who had traveled across country as they entered the Fremont Experience Showroom. Entering to fanfare on the red carpet were Judge Mablean Ephriam, Dick Gregory, actor Richard Roundtree, Jerry Edwards, honorees, mistress of ceremonies and other celebrities. The awards show, although taped, was quite impressive and thoroughly enjoyed by guests, family and celebrities.

Anna Maria Horsford, Ollie Woodson, Richard Brooks and a plethora of Barden's close relatives, sisters, brothers, and cousins, were delighted with the Trumpet Award presented to Barden. Concluding activities was a concert by Howard Hewett and an after-party at the hotel.

The second anniversary, although shorter in days than the first, will be remembered for a long time. It was a once in a life experience.



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