

Police brass try to build bridges at NAACP forum

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

The opportunity was there to question top brass about policing in the community, but only 20 showed at a police forum hosted by the Las Vegas Branch of the NAACP.

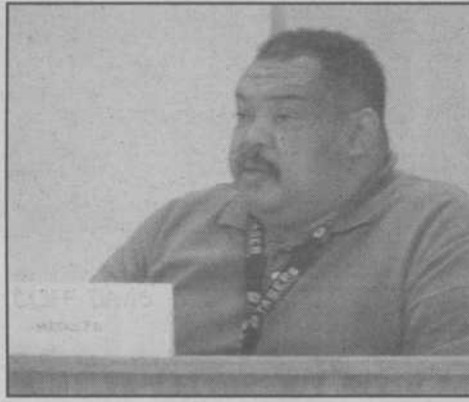
The forum was held on Thursday, April 29 and moderated by Mujahid Ramadan, second vice president of the NAACP. Seven invited experts showed, including Clark County District Attorney David Roger, FBI spokesperson Ellen Knolton, Henderson Police Chief Mike Mayberry, Metro Police Deputy Chief Cliff Davis, North Las Vegas Police Chief Mark Paresi and Assistant Chief Joe Forti and prison warden James Cox.

Most who attended the forum at Teamsters Local 631 were either NAACP staff, from local police agencies, the District Attorney's office, prison facilities or media.

Due to the sparse number, the issue of community support appeared to be left for future discussion. Local law enforcement, however, did represent.

"I'm really excited that all of the law enforcement agencies showed up," Dean Ishman, branch president, said. "I am a bit saddened that the public did not show up. We had people from Metro, North Las Vegas, Henderson, the District Attorney and prisons here to address the concerns of the community but they weren't in wide attendance.

"We have so many complaints called into



Sentinel-Voice photo by Lés Pierres Streater
Metro Police Deputy Chief Cliff Davis participated in a civic forum on cop issues.

the NAACP office all the time," he said. "We have tried to reach out to those individuals who have those complaints with regards to police concerns and the turnout here was not acceptable. I hope in the future we can do a better job in getting the word out and getting people to the meeting to air their concerns and dispel some of the myths that they have about the police departments. This is a new age and police departments realize they must work with the community and NAACP to better relationships and cooperation."

Ramadan defined Community Organized Policing (COP).

"We are going to have varying opinions and views as to what COP happens to be and what is the relationship with those individu-

als in the community," he said. "This will be based on the person's experience with law enforcement and what perception they bring into the relationship."

One of the areas explored in the forum was use of excessive force by police. What is it and how is it implemented? Who monitors policy, complaints and what are the consequences of excessive force findings? Mayberry responded.

"Excessive force, in its simplest term, is any force that is used by a police officer that really isn't necessary and isn't required for them to complete the task that they have in hand," he said. "I, unfortunately, in my position as chief of Henderson, had the unfortunate experience of actually having a couple of cases where officers have used excessive force."

"Excessive force is something that I take very, very seriously. It's something that I know does happen and we all try to prevent it to the best of our ability. We try to instill in all of our officers that they need to treat every individual with respect. What we try to teach our officers to do now is to be smarter and use more communications skills," Mayberry said.

The FBI's Knolton also responded.

"When I think about excessive force, every situation is different," Knolton said. "People are in conflict situations on both sides and the adrenaline is running high. Sometimes, when we look back on a situa-

tion, especially when one has been involved in a situation, they can say I wished that I had handled that situation in a different manner. That to me is not excessive force. To me, excessive force is that which is over and above the minimum necessary to control a situation or subdue someone who is being punished."

Other topics addressed included use of Tasers, police pursuits and arrests, police addressing civil disobedience, training of new recruits to understand the needs of a community and how to communicate effectively. Some wanted to know about hiring and recruitment of minority police officers, grand jury investigations of the use of excessive force and how the community can come together and participate with the police.

North Las Vegas' Paresi said. "One of the things that we teach new officers is that they need to separate themselves from being personally drawn into a situation while making adjustments and not acting inappropriately," Paresi said. "Excessive force is viewed very seriously within this organization and there's nothing more that puts the reputation and relationship of this organization to greater risk with the community than to allow officers to engage in the use of excessive force. That's probably one of the most profound issues that burdens us everyday of our lives because the men and women who work for us are there to serve and protect you."

Week meant to draw attention to nation's uninsured

By Parker Philpot
Special to Sentinel-Voice

A new program will provide free basic primary health care for eligible working Nevadans who lack health insurance. The "Volunteers in Medicine Free Health Care Project" will start taking applications from local residents on May 8. Introduction of the Volunteers in Medicine Free Health Care Project and open registration was timed to coincide with the second annual "Cover the Uninsured Week."

May 10-16 has been designated to raise awareness about what event organizers consider an "urgent" problem.

Cover the Uninsured Week includes a diverse group of organizations, representing many sectors of American society, including business owners, union members, educators, health consumers, hospitals, health insurers, physicians, nurses, faith leaders and their congregations, among others. Former Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter are honorary co-chairs. Noah Wyle, star of the top-rated television drama "ER," is serving as the national spokesperson.

An estimated 44 million Americans in the workforce have no medical insurance.

Minority groups make up a "disproportionate share of the uninsured population," according to Cover the Uninsured Week.org. The Web site provides online fact sheets, resource materials and suggests community activities to help workers get healthcare.

The national event provides information and helps promote understanding about the plight of working people who don't have health insurance. Organizers invite concerned citizens and healthcare professionals to take part in solutions for their local communities.

"Minor illnesses become major because healthcare is delayed. One significant medical expense can wipe out a family's bank account," the national organization warns.

Las Vegas-based Volunteers in Medicine Free Healthcare Project is a joint effort between Health Projects Nevada, a local nonprofit group, and the national Volunteers in Medicine Institute (VMI), which spearheads this effort in 14 states. The VMI encourages communities to be proactive in finding solutions for uninsured patients, like the free clinic programs they establish and oversee in partnership with local service organizations.

"No community can be truly healthy if a significant portion of the population is excluded from basic healthcare services," VMI spells out in its mission statement. "In the absence of a national health policy that includes health care for everyone, concerned citizens need to find other ways to provide the medically underserved with the health care services they need."

The growing population of workers in Nevada without health insurance currently includes more than 600,000, said Ken Little, executive administrator of Health Projects Nevada.

The local project hopes to provide community-based help for those affected and to raise awareness about how the problem affects everyone locally.

"The time has come that Nevada should have free health care for the working uninsured. We are a community-based multi-cultural organization trying to provide those services," Little said.

Eligible uninsured participants in the Volunteers in Medicine Free Health Care Project will get medical services ranging from basic screenings and diagnostic tests to comprehensive treatment.

"All services will be 100

percent free for qualified registered patients," Little announced.

The first free clinic, where registered participants can receive care, will be held May 22 from 2 to 5 p.m. at the

Green Valley Library, 2790 North Green Valley Parkway, in Henderson. In addition, the public is invited to attend a free health fair on-site at the same time.

"We will provide the kinds

of services patients usually go to the emergency room for or to a doctor," Little said, naming usual problems like colds, flu, cuts, upset stomach, headaches and more
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Hirschman wins student of month

The Expertise School of Beauty has selected Tanya Hirschman as their student of the month. Tanya is very serious about her craft. She specializes in hair coloring, waxing and cold waves. After graduation in two weeks, Tanya will head to California and enroll in an advanced cosmetology course offered there. "I've loved hair, nails and anything to do with beauty for as long as I can remember," said Tanya. After completion of her advance training, Tanya will return to Las Vegas and work in an upscale salon. She plans to open her own Day Spa in two years. "At Expertise you learn about diversity so you can expand your knowledge. I am glad I chose this school for my training."

Congratulations Tanya!



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