

# Davies

(Continued from Page 1)

sports," she said. "I would love to work behind the scene in the music industry. I would love to meet Puff Daddy because he is progressive and always looking for the next new star. I have a rapper I've been working with in the studio who is going to blow-up," Davies said.

This, however, is a story of family and self-sacrifice. Davies has seven younger brothers and four sisters ranging from age 5 to 19. Shortly before her 24th birthday a family crisis occurred. Child Protective Services removed all of her siblings from the home.

"I remember getting a call telling me that they (CPS) had gone to my mom's house and taken all the children at home and then went to the other children's school's and taken them," Davies said.

The courts determined that paternal rights were to be terminated for both Davies' mother and the father of her seven youngest siblings and all eleven children placed in foster homes.

(The nature of the removal will not be disclosed here because of a privacy agreement.)

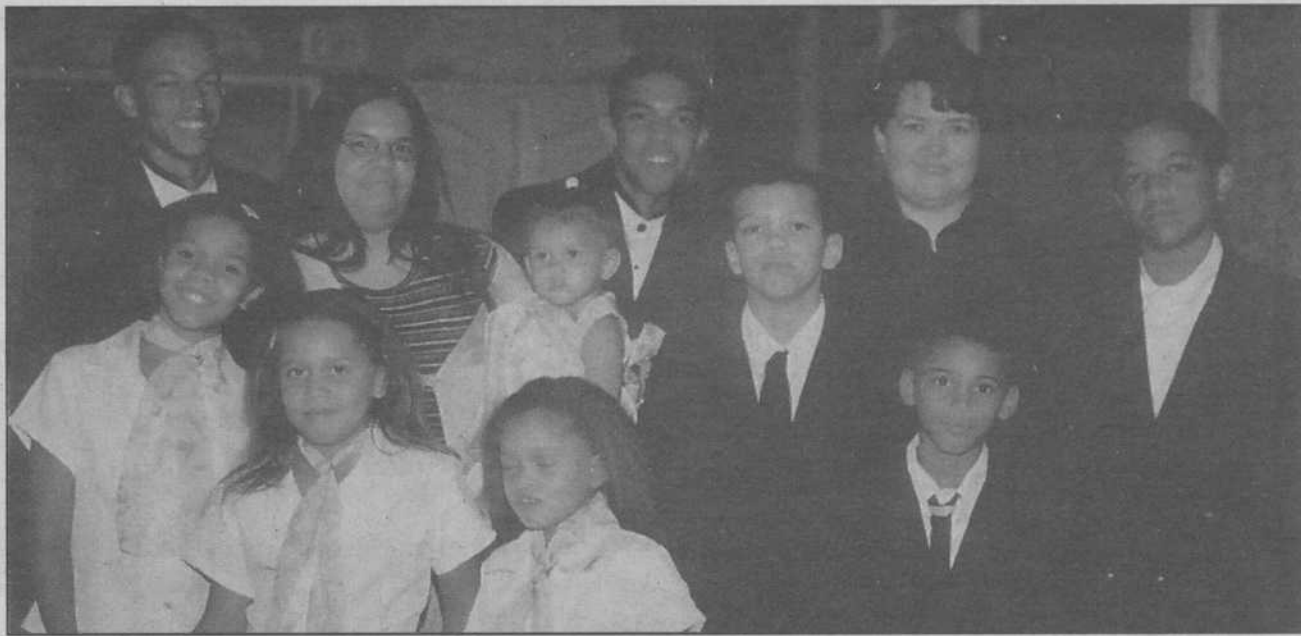
The thought of all her siblings being spread out all over only God knows where, sent Davies into action. She put her life on hold, pulled out her 'shero cape' and began working with social workers at CPS.

"We had this one judge who said to my mother that he would never give custody of any of my brothers and sisters to any family member," said Davies. "That really scared me because it seemed like he had set his mind up to destroy our family."

However, after going through a background check, before a different judge and taking required classes, Davies went to court and gained custody of her 2-month-old sister Dawnaja. Davies then became a licensed group home operator and in October 2000 got custody of five more of her siblings. In January 2001, she got custody of her three oldest brothers.

Mandy Mokae, founder of the Mokae Resource Scholarship Foundation was a presenter at a workshop two years ago sponsored by the Court Appointed Special Advocate (C.A.S.A.) agency when she met Davies. Davies, one of the honoree's, story was told and she was presented with a van from Tom Saitta's Integrity Chrysler Plymouth.

"I keep telling her story



Sentinel-Voice photo by Joyce Hudson

**A Family United:** (Back row, left to right) Freddie Jackson, Letha Davies, Dawnaja Manor (baby), Andre Jackson, Dion Davies, social worker Maryann Hamrick and Eric Jackson. (Front row) Shakuana, Keiyona, Aeshia and Taeron Manor.

because the children are getting older and their needs are constantly changing...I've been a foster parent so I know first hand how hard it is, but I've never had as many children as she does...she is remarkable," Mokae said.

Davies and Mokae work at Caesars Palace. Davies is a third-shift cook in the employee's commons, and Mokae is a blackjack dealer.

Mokae is also a member of J.U.G.S. She and her husband, Zakes, are former foster parents and through their foundation assist aging out teens in foster care transition to independent adult life. Mokae, so moved by the sacrifice she learned Davies was making, reached out to help by introducing her to members of J.U.G.S.

"I was blown away when Mandy told me about her," Carroll said. "Here is this young girl taking responsibility for all her siblings on a cook's salary. Of course, she needed help. We had to do something. She still needs help. As a community I believe we need to do more to help and encourage her."

While most 24-year-olds would be out sowing their wild oats, Davies was doing everything humanly possible to keep her family together despite their situation. Sometimes those mandated to help have been a mixed bag.

"I've had good social workers and some really horrifyingly bad ones," Davies said. "I try only to remember the good ones. The one I remember the most is Maryann Hemrick. She has had my back and helped us get through some tough times."

Davies said, "I chuckle when I think about being 29 and raising nine of my eleven brothers and sisters. When I was young, I used to tell my mom that I would never have children of my own. I felt that the world is too bad and there

are so many children in homes who are mistreated and need to be loved. I always told my mother that I would adopt."

And adopt is what she did. Davies was so terrified at the thought of CPS snatching her family away and farming them out that she legally adopted six of her youngest siblings, becoming mother-sister.

"I just stayed too nervous about CPS," she said. "Sometimes we would have good workers that tried to help us and other times they were mean-spirited," Davies said.

Davies' siblings are biracial. Their mother is White and their father is Black. Davies believes race may have been an issue with some of the social workers.

Davies admits raising nine children is very expensive and has its moments. Someone always needs something. Be it shoes or clothes or extra help with homework or taking them to the doctor and dentist, purchasing medicine or planning activities to keep them out of trouble. All that can be a handful, however, Davies is not alone.

Her natural father and stepmother help out with the children. She is fortunate to have them.

"My dad and stepmother treat my brothers and sisters like they are their own grandchildren," she said. "They pick them up and spend time with them and take them places I can't afford."

Their mom is now 42 years old, still married and living in Las Vegas. She and the father visit on occasion and help.

Still, the challenge is enormous. Housing has been another challenge. Finding landlords willing to rent to such a young and large family was difficult. However, through much sacrifice, Davies recently became a homeowner.

"The people who sold her the house took advantage of her," Carroll said. "The house needs a lot of repair."

Davies was selected by the Rebuilding Together (formerly Christmas in April) to have needed repairs made to the exterior and interior of her home, including a new roof and plumbing. When the repairs will be made, however, has not been finalized. Help could be a year away.

Rebuilding Together is a national organization whose

mission is to preserve and revitalize houses and communities, assuring low-income homeowners, particularly those who are elderly, disabled, and families with children, live in warmth, safety and independently. All repairs are free for homeowners. Businesses and contractors donate labor and most supplies. Homeowners and family members are only asked to welcome the volunteers into their home and work alongside them to the extent

possible.

There have been many adjustments.

"I didn't anticipate life happening the way it did, but I don't regret a thing," Davies exhaled. "I can't give them all the things they want, like new clothes and shoes, and we don't have much furniture, but I do the best I can. We have each other and we're together and all under one roof, except for Jessye and James, they live with their great-aunt, Pat."

Carroll said she hopes Davies gains national attention for what she is doing.

"She should be lauded for caring so much for her family and nurturing them the way she does," Carroll said. "I've never met anyone quite like her. I just love her. I don't know what else to say, except 'Happy Mother's Day, Letha.'"

By definition, all female parents are mothers. However, not all mothers are nurturers. Davies' unselfish love and ability to nurture proves that one need not give birth to exhibit a mother's love; nor are you limited by age. On Mother's Day, remember to take time to reflect on the females who nurtured you.

THE ROYAL STREET THEATRE PRESENTS

# NOT TOWN

10 P.M. - 2 A.M.  
in the Royal Street Theatre

**FREE**  
with a two drink min.

Appearing in **MAY**

**THE EXPERIENCE**

**JERRY'S NUGGET**

All Bands Subject To Change

1821 Las Vegas Blvd. N.  
(702) 399-3000