

Needy students to get free eye exams, glasses

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

Saturday, Nov. 20, from 9 a.m. to noon, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, also known as Delta Theta Boule, will be sponsoring its Free Eyeglasses & Examinations for needy students event.

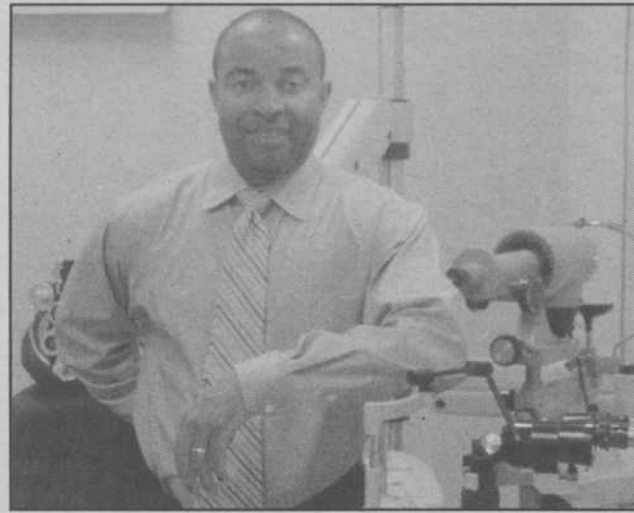
The event will be held at the Westfield Eye Center, 2575 Lindell Rd., and appointments are required. For an appointment call 702-796-1419. The deadline for obtaining an appointment is Friday, Nov. 12. Walk-ins will not be accepted.

This is the fifth year for

the event done by the fraternity founded in Philadelphia in 1904. It was the first African American Greek-letter organization. One of the missions of the organization is participating in social action and maintaining an active social responsibility in giving back to the community.

In this regard, they perform many duties throughout the year and sponsoring the Free Eyeglasses & Examinations for needy students event is just one way.

The day will target students age 5 to 18 from families who cannot afford eye



Sentinel-Voice photo by Lés Pierres Streater

Dr. Dexter Morris, a local ophthalmologist, will participate in a vision health fair put on by Sigma Pi Phi fraternity.

care or are completely uninsured. Also any children wearing glasses with a prescription that is one or more years old and in need of a check up and replacement qualify.

Ophthalmologists participating in this event include Dr. George Leeks from Pahrump, Dr. Robert Taylor from Shepard Eye Institute, Dr. Tyree Carr with Nevada Institute of Ophthalmology, and Dr. Kenneth Westfield of Westfield Eye Center.

Ophthalmologist Dr. Dexter Morris who will be among the doctors at the

event, talked about the event and why his fraternity sponsors it annually.

"We are a fraternity of college-educated Black men, and what we are trying to do is provide services to those individuals who cannot afford to pay for an eye examination and eyewear," Morris said.

"The reward of participating in this event to me personally is that we are contributing to someone's life and making a difference as it relates to their educational advancement and social development." (See Glasses, Page 13)

Adoption

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one or more reasons, physical or sexual abuse, or some form of neglect, and these children only need the benefit of living with a responsible family providing consistency in their lives.

In order for us to reach our ultimate goal of adoption or foster placement for these children, we have to educate the public about the need to giving these children an opportunity to have a normal life.

So, we're here today to expose our organization and the children to the public in an effort to find perfect matches."

On hand for the fair were volunteers with CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) and a number of children that are free for adoption and are featured in the Nevada 'forever families' album.

Saitta said the idea was to create an atmosphere of fun that would draw people to the event to get information about foster parenting and adoption.

Recently, targeted efforts to aid in the adoption of African-American children has resulted in communications with Victory Missionary Baptist and First A.M.E. churches with hopes that members will consider a church-wide adoption programs.

Gerald Robinson, a social worker and recruiter for the Clark County Department of Family Services, provided additional insight into the annual event.

"The month of November has been designated as National Adoption Month, and we are here today celebrating adoption and family placement for our children.

We're offering seminars for families to get credit towards their effort to qualify as foster parents and adoptive parents.

We also have information from various agencies to assist people in understanding the requirements of becoming a foster or adoptive parent."

To qualify as a foster parent or adoptive parent a person must attend a six-series seminar for 18 hours of training

as an individual, have knowledge and understanding of childcare and problems of children with special needs and participate in required training. Applicants also must agree to being fingerprinted, having their background checks for anyone 21 or older living in the residence, in-

or that there were other barriers to prevent me from becoming an adoptive parent.

I thought that I was aware of all those stereotypes and wouldn't be capable of qualifying as an adoptive parent.

As I found out in the orientation, I could do it, and all that was necessary was a heart to care for the children, and a place where the children can grow up and be productive."

After being licensed as a foster care provider Mathur adopted two special needs children, Richard who was a month shy of his ninth birthday and nobody seemed to want him, and Joseph, who was born at UMC (University Medical Center) as a cocktail street drug baby.

One and a half year later, she adopted Shawtai (Tai), who was five months old.

"You have to have your eyes open when you take in children who have been apart of the system, and it doesn't mean that they are less different from anyone else.

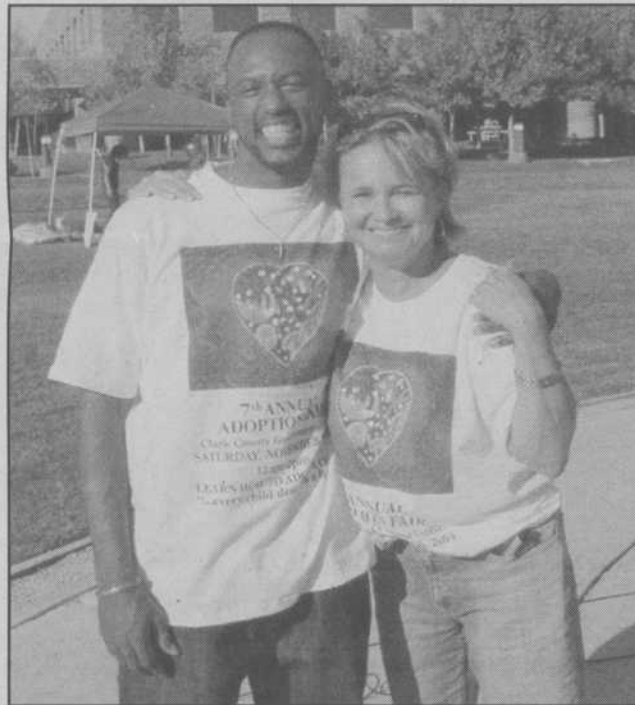
This has been one of the most extraordinary things that I could have done in my life, most rewarding, and most effortless guaranteeing me joy and fulfillment," Mathur said.

Rosemary Thomas, a foster parent of 10 years, spoke about her involvement with foster care after retirement.

"After retiring from the postal service in Los Angeles, and moving to Las Vegas, I enjoyed myself for about a year going to the casinos and eating at many of the restaurants.

I then found myself with the need to do something else, and occupying a big home with no one but my mother and myself, I decided to give back to the community, and so I became a foster parent," she said.

"It has been great for me, and I have had 15 children in



Sentinel-Voice photo by Lés Pierres Streater

Gerald Robinson, a social worker and recruiter for the county's Department of Family Services, and Judge Nancy Saitta participated in the 7th Annual Adoption Exchange.

ing prior to placement. The training consists of an orientation process, information on the department of Child and Family and Youth Services, child abuse, neglect issues, unique challenges to foster children, discipline and permanency issues.

An additional 18 hours of training is required after children are placed to address parenting skills," Robinson said.

Individuals interested in becoming a licensed foster parent or special needs adoptive parent must be 21, a U.S. citizen, possess sound judgment and decision-making skills, possess skills necessary to live as a family group, accept and respect each child

come verification, tuberculosis testing, cardio pulmonary resuscitation certification and an in-home evaluation.

Punam Mathur, gaming executive with MGM MIRAGE, is the adoptive parent of three. She attended the event and said her reason for becoming a foster parent was because, "I have always known on some level that I wanted to be an adoptive parent. Six years ago, when the first adoption took place, I was apart of the committee hosting the first adoption fair, and went inside to get information about the process.

Being a single person and working fulltime, I expected to hear that I wasn't qualified



Sentinel-Voice photo by Lés Pierres Streater

Rosemary Thomas enjoys foster sons Terrence Fisher and David Harris. She's adopted 15 foster kids over the years.

my home since I began foster care.

Right now I have three 12-year-old boys living with me, who came to live with me when they were younger, and now they are students attending middle school.

This is an experience that I am really enjoying.

I am still in touch with all of the children who have lived with me, and on Easter we all spend the day at Sunset Park."

Another aspect of this year's adoption fair was to advocate that all children have a right to a home with loving people to care for them.

CASA works to represent these children in court to ensure that they have a voice in the decision-making process of placement into foster care

or reunification with their parents.

These individuals volunteer their time to advocate in the best interest of the children who are sometimes lost in an overburdened child welfare system that cannot pay close attention to the individual child's needs and left in foster care for months or years.

CASA is recruiting volunteers and said the average monthly commitment is 12 hours.

Anyone interested in becoming a CASA volunteer, may contact CASA recruiter Deniece Lopez at 702-455-4306. For more information about foster care or becoming an adoptive parent, you may contact Gerald Robinson at 1-888-423-2659.

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