

# LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

VOLUME 24, ISSUE 13

GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

February 24, 2005

"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"



Photographer Ameenah Shafeeq will be displaying her pictures of mountainous terrain in Southern Nevada during the expo at the West Las Vegas Cultural Arts Center.

## Find Your Sacred Space Expo combines inner healing, art

By Albert C. Jones  
Sentinel-Voice

The invitation was extended three years for Gaile Ferguson-Muhammad to coordinate a women's conference at the West Las Vegas Cultural Arts Center.

In searching for a special name, she looked to inspiration. Ferguson-Muhammad gleaned "Sacred Spaces" from a lecture she had heard.

"Sacred Spaces" was perfect," she said. "This will be the third consecutive year that we will celebrate the magnificence of women in March at the West Las Vegas Cultural Arts Center.

"We believe women are healers," Ferguson-



*"What I'm looking to do is capture the spiritual and serene aspects of the Nevada Mountains, desert and surrounding areas."*

— Ameenah Shafeeq

Muhammad said. "When women come together for a positive and enlightening program, we benefit as individuals. Ultimately, our families and the community benefit because women are the first teachers."

The Third Annual "Find Your Sacred Spaces Expo" will be held Saturday, March 5 at 10 a.m. at the arts center, 947 West Lake Mead Blvd. This year's theme is "Women Celebrating Women While (See Sacred Expo, Page 2)

## Prayer directed at combatting AIDS

By Makeba Anderson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Church sanctuaries will be filled this Sunday just like they are every week. Preachers will be imparting the gospel, deacons will be taking offering, ushers will be signaling and directing people to available seats, and everyone will be praying.

This Sunday, many churches will be offering a different prayer — a prayer for the healing of AIDS.

"We believe that prayer changes things," says Perness C. Seele, founder and CEO of the Balm in Gilead, Inc., the organizer of the Black Church Week of Prayer. "Whatever we do, we have to start with prayer.

We are also asking churches to have AIDS education sermons, programs and Bible studies. We begin with prayer, but we know you have to study to show yourself approved. We have to pray, work and educate."

This Sunday kicks off the Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS. It started 16 years ago as the Harlem Week of Prayer.



*"We believe that prayer changes things. Whatever we do, we have to start with prayer."*

— Perness C. Seele,  
Founder and CEO of the  
Balm in Gilead, Inc.

"I was working at Harlem Hospital back in 1989, and I was working in the AIDS service office. One of my responsibilities was to work with people living with HIV," recalls Seele. "I was taken back by the lack of pastors and people in church that were present."

Frustrated with what she calls a lack of concern for the ill, Seele began to pray.

"They [pastors and church members] weren't coming to the hospital to see people with HIV. I am from Lincoln, S.C., and people come see you when you are sick and that is not what was happening. One morning I didn't want to go to work and I was praying and I got an idea. It started as

the Harlem Week of Prayer and from that The Balm in Gilead was born."

The organization takes its name from Jeremiah 8:22: "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

The New York-based Balm in Gilead is currently one of the largest HIV/AIDS awareness programs in the U.S. and five Africa countries: Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania. Unlike most HIV/AIDS outreach programs, the Balm in Gilead, focuses on mobilizing faith communities and relies on them to, in turn,

(See Church, Page 13)

## Documentary highlights Black firefighters in Sept. 11

By Tanya Flanagan  
Sentinel-Voice

A compelling documentary recapping numerous accounts of the contributions made by African-American firefighters in New York City on September 11, 2001, will be shown Sunday at the West Las Vegas Arts Center.

The 28-minute documentary, "All Our Sons: Fallen Heroes of 9/11," will be shown between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. at the arts center, 947 W. Lake Mead Blvd. Sunday's event is sponsored by the United Firefighters of Southern Nevada and the Professional Black Firefighters of Clark County. Admission is free.

"We wanted to do some-

thing for Black History Month, so given that our organization tries to raise awareness about Black firefighters in the fire service, we thought it would be a great opportunity to really make people aware that there were actual Black firefighters who sacrificed their lives in that event. Not often did we see those faces when the media covered the event," said Bertral Washington, president of the United Firefighters of Southern Nevada.

Washington said his organization, while predominantly Black, also has Hispanic and Caucasian members and is part of the International Association of Black

Professional Firefighters.

The film recounts the lifelong dreams and last moments of 12 men who responded to the scene of the World Trade Center Towers after two jetliners crashed into the Twin Towers. Mothers, fathers and wives of the fallen New York City firefighters tell the stories of these men. In the documentary, these family members share memories of what each individual was like and what made his contribution and dedication to the New York City Fire Department so special.

Additionally, the documentary takes you beyond the surface and into the 16-acre site to see the rubbish left behind by the crumbling of

the towers. Mother Irene Smith, tells how her son Leon Smith Jr., carrying 60 pounds of equipment, entered one of the towers just minutes before it collapsed.

Maria Barreto-Mojita, wife of Dennis Mojita, talks in the documentary of how she knew her husband would be with Smith because the two always worked together and watched each other's backs when responding to calls. When their bodies were recovered from the rubble in the days after the towers collapsed, Mojita and Smith were side by side.

All of the men were members of the Vulcan Society, a fraternal organization founded in 1940 by Blacks

on the New York City Fire Department to help fight against discrimination within the department.

In the documentary, Vulcan Society President Paul Washington talks about the men of his organization and that fateful September day saying, "It was unbelievable. It was like nothing I'd ever seen."

Award-winning filmmaker Lillian E. Benson, who contributed to the popular documentary "Eyes on the Prize," produced "All Our Sons" for Lightwave Pictures. She worked in concert with Craig Kelly, a retired Fire Lt. from the Bridgeport, Conn. Fire Department.

Kelly, a degreed psycho-

therapist had been in New York responding to distraught families at Ground Zero when Washington called him to suggest he come and counsel mothers and family members of the Black firefighters killed in the terrorists attack. Kelly's counseling sessions resulted in the idea for the film being born as a way to give permanent recognition to the men who were killed.

"The firefighters who gave their lives don't deserve any more than the other firefighters who died, but rest assured, they do not deserve any less than any Caucasian firefighters who died in the World Trade Center [attacks]," said Kelly, adding (See Fallen Heroes, Page 7)