

ACT-SO offers competition, recognition

High school students get an opportunity to showcase talent for NAACP convention

By Asmeret Asghedom
Sentinel-Voice

From Los Angeles to New York and cities in between, a program known as the Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics or ACT-SO has stretched its name into the neighborhoods of African-American youth, providing them with an opportunity to showcase and strengthen their academic and technology talents while competing at a national level. Here in Las Vegas, ACT-SO is re-emerging locally, Friday, April 21, at the West Las Vegas Arts Center, since its last activity here was nine years ago.

"The program is structured to enable local African-American students to compete and work with professionals. It gives them an opportunity to feel comfortable while exposing their talents," said Detrick Sanford with Nevada Partners Inc.

Sanford is ACT-SO's coordinator. He said the central purpose of the annual competition is to decrease the rate of high school dropouts, and the program is geared toward that age range of students.

Sponsored by the NAACP and in conjunction with the City of Las Vegas, Clark County and Nevada Partners, this year's program is underway, but it is not too late to become a participant.

Sanford said letters were sent out to high schools late last year informing administrators to encourage students

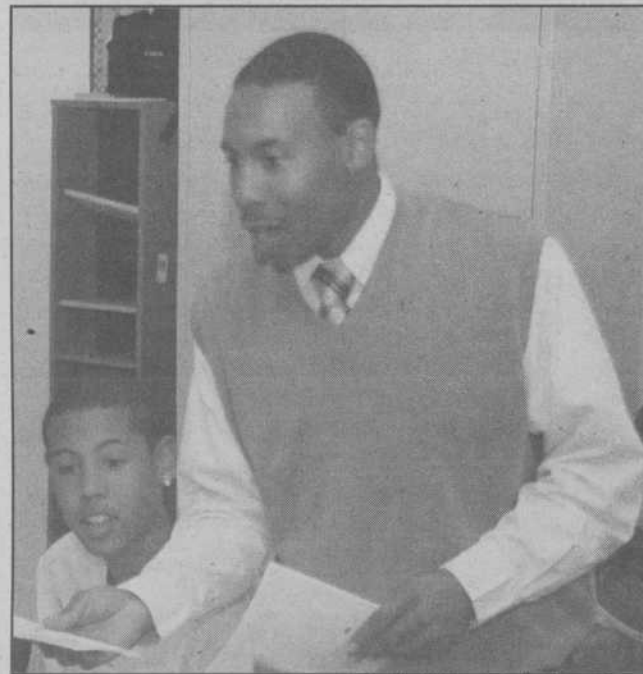
to participate. Students who didn't get the memo are encouraged to contact Sanford at (702) 924-2133 or go to the Nevada Partners office at 710 W. Lake Mead Blvd, and fill out an application by Monday.

Students are allowed to freely create or display their talents as long as it fits into one of the competition's categories. Students decide what they wish to present in their respective skills and interest categories, with little restriction on the type of appropriate activities chosen.

There are five categories: the sciences, humanities, performing arts, visual arts and business. The sciences include architecture, biology, chemistry, computer science,

mathematics, and three divisions of physics: electronics, energy and general. The humanities category entails music composition, original essay, playwriting and poetry. Performing arts include dance, dramatics, music instrumental contemporary or classical, music vocal contemporary or classical and oratory. Visual arts include drawing, painting, photography, sculpture and filmmaking. The business category consists of skills in entrepreneurship.

Sanford, along with various coaches specializing in the different categories, has been hosting workshops since January to prepare the current 20 high school students for the competition.



Detrick Sanford briefs several youth on the details of the NAACP's ACT-SO competition.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Je-Na Givens and Willie Broussard discuss activities in preparation for the ACT-SO local competition showcasing academic skills of African-American high school students.

Unfortunately, those who apply now won't have the advantage of advance work with the coaches, but they are still eligible to compete. Sanford explained that the competition is still beneficial for those just joining, and they will have the opportunity to showcase their talents

and possibly accelerate to the next level. The next level, the national competition, will be held for four days in Washington D.C., starting on July 12. First place winners from each category in the local competitions will get an all-expense paid trip to compete at national.

Sanford urges the community to attend the competition next Friday.

"We as a community should embrace these students," he said. They are taking the initiative to put themselves in a real-life scenario, which, in the long run, will be significant to their lives."

Gag order denied in Walgreens race discrimination litigation

RENO, Nev. (AP) - A judge in Reno has denied a gag order sought by drugstore chain Walgreen Co. to restrict comments from plaintiffs in an upcoming racial discrimination trial.

Washoe District Judge Janet Berry, in an order dated April 4, rejected company arguments that continued remarks by the four men would taint the jury pool and jeopardize a fair trial.

Berry said the injunction sought "is not necessary or appropriate."

Bruce Johnson and three other Black men from Houston, ages 28 to 42, filed a lawsuit in June 2003 seeking \$2.5 million each in damages from Deerfield, Ill.-based Walgreen after they say they were discriminated against at a Walgreens drugstore in downtown Reno.

The men said that after they complained about the quality of a photograph processed at the store in February 2003, the clerk shouted a racial slur, slammed a door and refused service. The case is scheduled to go to trial May 8.

In its motion filed last month, the com-

pany asked the judge for an injunction prohibiting the men and their lawyers "from making any public statements relating to this matter up through and including trial."

Johnson, Cadarell Freeman, Mark Mills and Michael Price "have made sure that reports regarding this case have been aired in Deerfield, Ill., in Houston, Texas, on online news wires and here in Reno, Nevada," the motion said.

Company lawyers emphasized in the motion that they were not asking the court to restrain the media from reporting on the case.

"Instead, Walgreen Co. simply seeks an order from this court that precludes the trial participants — as opposed to the press — from commenting on this trial and poisoning the jury pool," they wrote.

In a statement issued over the weekend, Johnson said public campaigns against the pharmacy retailer would continue.

"It is time for us to stand up for our civil rights and stop letting retailers like Walgreens treat us like second class shoppers," Johnson told the Associated Press.

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