

Group hosts swingin' social

Swing Phi Swing hopes to generate interest

By Debbie Hall
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In 1969, a diverse group of college women, dissatisfied with the Greek sororities available on college campuses and committed to change and sisterhood, founded Swing Phi Swing, Social Fellowship Inc. Daring to be different 37 years ago, their vision to begin an organization is still proving a worthy commitment to heightening Black awareness, cultural consciousness and personal development, while embracing Afrocentricity.

There are two levels of Swing Phi Swing, undergraduate and graduate. In her second year of her term, Alice Vaughn-Motley, the local graduate chapter president, has been involved since 1970 and understands the dynamics that created this organization.

She attended Purdue University in 1967 and joined the Black Student Union. She looked at the

Delta and Alpha Kappa Alpha Greek organizations on the multi-racial campus.

While she felt the fraternities were great, Vaughn-Motley recalled, "I didn't like the Black sororities. I thought they were bourgeois and didn't represent true sisterhood at the time."

She explained, "My father is blue collar and I didn't come from money. However, my brothers and I are all college graduates and we had so much to contribute. Also, Purdue was so overwhelming to me. I remember sitting in a lecture hall with 450 students. That academic life was not for me."

She had the opportunity to continue her education and chose to do so at one of the Historically Black Universities and Colleges — North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.

"I experienced true sisterhood, and I loved attending an [HBCU] — the unity, the bonding," Vaughn-Motley said. "You learn to respect

your own people, and there were other organizations, so I chose to join Swing Phi Swing. These sisters were serious and background was not important. Their mission was truly to serve."

Vaughn-Motley moved to Las Vegas ten years ago and is very active volunteering her time to feeding programs and mentoring young women.

"Our main mission is to be a mentor to young ladies throughout the U.S. Swing Phi Swing has been a very big part of my life. I have sisters with interests of promoting higher intelligence and serving our community."

Leone Lettsome, Southwest Regional Administrator, is from a different era. She pledged at East Coast College and was determined to get Swing Phi Swing to the west coast.

When she moved to Las Vegas, she was recognized by another "Swing Sister" wearing a "Swing" tee-shirt and the Las Vegas Chapter

was established in 2003.

Recently, she participated in Nevada Girls Day out with Boys and Girls Club by volunteering and participating in the mentorship with a fun day for girls.

"This is so important to connect and be a part of young girls' lives. Swing Phi Swing is a great way for me to accomplish these goals," Lettsome said.

For those interested in membership or learning more about the group, there is an interest meeting on Saturday, May 27 afternoon from 3:00 to 5:00 at the West Las Vegas Library at 951 W. Lake Mead Blvd.

The process starts with an application package, which includes written essays and participation in a cultural activity and a service activity. There are different levels and all women are invited to join.

For more data on Swing Phi Swing, call 800-70-Swing or 407-1269.

Fundraiser

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ward and Carey. It will also include a park, an Olympic size track and will operate 6 days a week from 7:00 a.m. to 12 midnight.

"It's a very good thing for the community because I don't know any other centers that stay open these hours," Shropshire added.

All fundraising event ticket holders are invited to participate in the pre-dinner reception. Following the dinner, there will be a performance by Broadway singer Brian Stokes, an African-American Tony Award winner.

"It's going to be a great gala and dinner with entertainment," Shropshire said.

The event organizers said they would like to have at least 500 people attend this inaugural fundraiser. The evening will also include an awards ceremony to present the MGM Mirage Corporation the Corporate Partner Award.

"[The MGM was our] first corporate sponsor. They gave us the money to operate and to get the charter. [This allowed us] to pay the affiliate dues," Shropshire said.

Other award recipients include Nevada Gaming Control Board member Robert L. Siller and Clark County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates.

Shropshire said Siller assisted the local Urban League by providing expert advice and suggesting a selection of sponsors the local chapter could solicit for funding and other resources. Because of his efforts and guidance, Siller is being awarded the Vernon E. Jordan Civic Award.

Jordan (the namesake of the award) is a 70-year-old Washington, D.C., attorney who served as National Urban League president from 1971 to 1981.

"Vernon Jordan will be here to present this award to Bobby Siller," Shropshire said.

Commissioner Gates will receive the William Pearson Community Center Award during the ceremony. Gates, who was mentored by Pearson in the early stages of her career, was also one of the driving forces behind the funding and creation of the new community center.

Tickets for this event are \$125 and they must be purchased in advance. For more information call (702) 636-3949.

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