

# Women lauded for extraordinary feats

By Debbie Hall  
Sentinel-Voice

American Women Changing America will hold an awards ceremony called "Ordinary Women Doing Extraordinary Things," on Saturday evening, August 5, at the Dallas Ballroom in the Texas Station Hotel and Casino from 7:00 to 9:00.

The purpose of the awards ceremony is to honor women in both local and national communities who pave new paths for the future genera-

tion of women. Other requirements for AWCA awards are the nominees' passion about social change, good works in their leadership roles, and the high level of admiration they have earned from their communities for helping those in need.

Originally called Women Changing America, the sponsoring organization changed its name in 2005 to American Women Changing America. Founder Sheila Collins explained the reason



*Diana Pollard of the Rainbow Medical Centers is the recipient of AWCA's 2006 Platinum Woman Award.*

for the AWCA change: "We wanted to include and reach women of all nationalities

and make it broader." Women Changing America Awards ceremony

was founded in 2002 and operated under the auspices of NAN, the National Action Network, founded in 2001 by Rev. Al Sharpton in Harlem, N.Y. Collins assisted the national organization with opening their first Las Vegas branch, located in North Las Vegas. Collins is a native of Las Vegas, a legal advocate, and a paralegal graduate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

The AWCA coordinating committee consists of five

women affiliated with the National Action Network organizations across the United States. The local members are Collins, Connie Turner and Celese Brown. Members Regina McCurry and Jkeonye Campbell are from Kansas City, Mo., and New York, N.Y., respectively.

Collins would also like to encourage women who have succeeded in their chosen careers and ambitions. "Women who have accom- (See Awards, Page 8)

## Camp

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The applicants must write an original 150-word essay, present two letters of recommendation, and submit a grade and citizenship report. The audition process involves presentation, exiting skills and assesses the applicant's willingness to learn and ability to commit. The final selection step includes a parent-student meeting with a commitment by both the parent and student.

Melissa Jewel Jeppe, cultural activities specialist with the West Las Vegas Arts Center, joined the program in 1999 as an instructor. It was a permanent program that she was thrilled to participate in on an ongoing basis.

Jeppe said, "[PVAC] has everything to do with the children's lives. It opens them up to who they are, who they believe that are, and who they can be. It is a gateway for them to express themselves, practice discipline, wisdom and knowledge of self."

West Las Vegas Arts Center Director Marcia Robinson and PVAC instructors are all experienced teachers and coaches with rich backgrounds. Several are internationally renowned in the arts and all are dedicated to helping youth.

Among them is Walter Mason, drama instructor and coordinator for the presentation series under the direction of Robinson and Jeppe, is an integral part of history for both the program and entertainment in Las Vegas.

When he retired as the director of entertainment for the Las Vegas Hilton, he said he wanted to "put my 50 years of experience to work where I thought it was needed. So, I came here and it has been a very fruitful experience. Young people have such a tremendous insight and abilities."

He was the production manager for Sammy Davis Jr. for ten years and certainly remembers the time when



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

*Marcia Robinson continues to be a beacon of hope for young people during the summer camp at the art center.*

Black entertainers could perform on the Strip but could not stay, eat or play in any of the luxury hotels.

"I was able to watch some of those changes. Later, after becoming involved in the Entertainment Department of the Hilton, I was able to bring some of the ongoing acts who happen to be Afro-American to Las Vegas."

Instructor Arthur Moore travels to Las Vegas annually from East St. Louis, Ill., as part of the Katherine Dunham Foundation where he has worked for the past 38 years. A percussionist, trained in Afro-cultural and other musical genres, he has known Robinson, who was mentored by the late Dunham, for a number of years and was invited to participate in the summer camp program.

"I came out a few years ago and I have been hooked ever since," Moore stated. For eight weeks, he lives and works for PVAC in Las Vegas during the rehearsals and final productions.

Stephan Reynolds, a featured character in "O" at the Bellagio, one of the younger instructors has excelled in his career. "I was given a chance as a young child," Reynolds said, "It would hurt my heart not to give that chance to an-

other child."

One enthusiastic youth participant, Avree Walker, has been part of the program for the past seven years. He told the *Sentinel-Voice*, "We get a lot of life skills on how we should carry ourselves in school, at home and our every day lives.

They prepare us for the real world when we become adults." The 15-year-old Walker spoke about his very positive experiences with all of the instructors and his desire to continue with the program as he becomes an adult.

The PVAC 2006 performance schedule and venue itinerary is as follows:

The first of the three performances is at 10:00 a.m., Tuesday, August 1, at the International House of Blues in the Mandalay Bay on the Strip at 3950 Las Vegas Blvd. South.

The next production is at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 3, at the Clark County Library Theatre at 1401 E. Flamingo. The final season presentation is on Saturday, August 5, at 2:00 p.m. in the West Las Vegas Library Theatre, located three blocks West of I-15 at 951 W. Lake Mead Blvd, adjacent to the West Las Vegas Arts Center.

For more information, call the center at 229-4800.

## Cirque du Soleil dancer teaches Las Vegas youth

By Chelsi Cheatom  
Sentinel-Voice

Local professional dancer Stephan Isijia Reynolds, a native of Nigeria, moved to Las Vegas from New York City four years ago to work as a feature dancer with the Celine Dion show, "A New Day," at Caesar's Palace. Reynolds is committed to his personal career but takes time to teach and mentor dozens of local boys and girls in a popular summer camp program.

Reynolds currently plays the feature character "Le Travesti" in the Cirque du Soleil production "O" by Franco Dragone

at the Bellagio five nights a week, two shows per night.

"I push for greatness. I worked very hard to get where I am and because of that, it means a lot more to me to have it than it would if had it been given to me. That's what I want the kids to understand and work for."

In both New York and his previous home of Minneapolis, Reynolds produced and directed a program similar to the local 10-year-old Performing & Visual Arts Camp, the summer program for kids (See Dancer, Page 3)

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