

# Program gives local seniors no blues

By Debbie Hall  
Sentinel-Voice

Today, many people over 60 years of age are active, vital, and they still want to learn and have different experiences. The "Never Too Late Band" consisting of several of those swinging seniors will present a free recital this Monday. It is open to the public and will be held at the International House of Blues inside Mandalay Bay. It runs from 10:00 a.m. until about noon.

Free roundtrip transportation will be provided. Buses will leave at 9:00 a.m. for transportation to Mandalay Bay from the Doolittle Senior Center located at 1950 North J Street off W. Lake Mead.

Following a concert in the park during National Jazz Month last year, Linda Hilliard had the idea to offer guitar classes at Doolittle where she works as a recreation leader in the Seniors Division.

To get started, Hilliard contacted Program Director Kim Russell with the International House of Blues SchoolHouse program to request guitars and other support for the fledging program. The International House of Blues SchoolHouse loaned 12 guitars, and the "Never Too Late Band" was born. There are currently nine participants in the program, all over 60.



Theodore Roosevelt, instructor for the "Never Too Late Band," points out the correct finger placement during a rehearsal at the Doolittle Senior Center on Monday.

Hilliard, who has been at Doolittle for about a year and a half, said that when she "found the seniors were really interested in this type of program, we went with it. It has been a very good thing." She said that several of them never played an instrument before joining the Senior Guitar Class.

Theodore Roosevelt Davis teaches the ongoing classes at Doolittle. Davis has been narrating the Blues SchoolHouse at the International House of Blues for the past seven years and plays several instruments as well.

When Russell asked him to help Hilliard's class, Davis said, "I would love to. When

I was young, there were [community programs], that if you were interested in learning music, you could go. I wanted to give back, and if anyone wants to learn music, I am willing to teach them. I am trying to keep the music alive."

He is very enthusiastic about the upcoming recital. "I feel great. This show is pretty unique to me. All of the senior citizen centers will be invited. This is a big to-do."

One band member, Beverly Person Sonnie, is originally from Massachusetts, where she worked for 30 years at the New England Medical Center. After mov-

ing to Las Vegas in 2004, Sonnie said she is "entering her second childhood, making many, many new friends and enjoying all of the activities at the center. Guitar and Soul Line Dancing are my favorites."

John Jett has been in the class for six months. He has always been interested in learning how to play the guitar since he retired three

years ago from a cement factory and moved from Knoxville Tenn., to Las Vegas.

"This is a great opportunity for me to continue lessons. Guitar lessons usually cost \$25 an hour and we get these lessons at a greatly reduced price," Jett said.

About the recital, Jett said, "I am excited, a little anxious, and I hope everything goes right."

Binnie Gaskins came to the program "because of my grandkids. They are all doing something, and so I decided I better join them. I wanted to be able to play something just to amuse myself." A re-

tiree from Castle Air Force Base in California, she has lived in Las Vegas for the past 12 years.

William Powell, retired from the military, came to "learn how to play a guitar." He added, "I found there are a lot of nice people to practice guitar [with here] and enjoy, especially [other class members] my age."

Powell moved from Illinois to Las Vegas one year ago due to the weather and is looking forward to performing in the concert.

For more information about the recital or joining the program, call 229-6125.



Taking a page from her grandchildren to do something, Binnie Gaskins decided to join the band.

## Smith takes aim at violence

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - Will Smith returned to his hometown to participate in a march against violence.

The actor and rapper said he wanted to do something about the violence in the city, which had 380 killings in 2005 and appears likely to top that number this year.

"We're going to take this

walk, hopefully draw a little attention to the problem and get some solutions," Smith said Saturday as he walked with his wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, in West Philadelphia, along with local officials and members of the community.

The level of violence last week prompted the *Philadelphia Daily News* to call for

the National Guard to patrol city streets.

Gov. Ed Rendell gave Philadelphia a \$7.5 million grant for 166,000 hours of police overtime to help deal with gun violence until state police free up 70 city officers by taking over highway patrols.

## Comedians

(Continued from Page 7) the circuit," she said. "We have to fight, fight, fight, to gain recognition. We constantly get that 'bitch' handle when we have to fight to get our money."

Tiffany Haddish is another emerging star on the L.A. comedy scene. A self-described "twentysomething" who could easily pass for a teenager, Haddish has been entertaining nightclub audiences since she was 16. The Laugh Factory regular also has a real-life, Pryor-

esque story: She was born in South Central L.A. to an absent Ethiopian father and schizophrenic mother, which led to a childhood in foster care.

With that background, she retreated into an imaginary life that she hopes will ultimately put her on the path to fame and fortune.

"I was sent to a comedy camp at the Laugh Factory when I was 13 because a social worker thought I was acting up at school trying to get attention. So she thought,

"I'll get you some attention," said Haddish, laughing. After a guest-starring stint on the Disney Channel's "That's So Raven," she recently completed her first lead film role in "The Urban Demographic," a comedy set for release early next year.


"I want to be a Lucille Ball, George Burns, Halle Berry, Jim Carrey mix," she said. "I want to smoke cigars, get into trouble and be cute and funny."

Olu Alemoru writes for WAVE Newspapers.

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