

Academy

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was sure to thank his teaching staff of about 26, praising the efforts and abilities they demonstrated while they sustained the educational setting, even as classes were temporarily housed.

"We've emerged successfully," he said, "and we have adjusted wonderfully," Henderson added.

The charter project was a tedious one and took two years to come to fruition, according to Vickie Frazier-Williams, vice president of Nevada Imagine Schools.

"There were times when we didn't think this [project] would happen," she said.

But luckily for the 504 children attending the school, it did.

"I thank God for the completion of this project," said Board President Tami Bass, "we ran into a few obstacles, but after partnering with the 100 Black Men of Las Vegas, we made it happen."

Bass stressed the idea that the educational resources provided by the school will efficiently introduce standard subject matters in non-traditional forms.

Numerous state and local leaders attended the event, placing emphasis on the importance of the day by delivering speeches, thanking parents, participating in songs led by music teacher Nick O'Conner and performed along with the academy's K through 5 students.

Nevada State Senator Steven Horsford, who is a member of the 100 Black Men of America, Las Vegas Chapter — the organization that helped sponsor much of the school's financial, organizational and academic processes.

Horsford discussed the statistics that currently surround declining equivalency test scores and deficient rates of high school completion for many Las Vegas youth and, therefore, praised the 100 Academy of Excellence for offering an alternative way of educating children: one that aides in their initial scholastic steps, affords more instructional options than that of public institutions, and is less expensive than entering into private sectors, according to Horsford.

Dennis Bakke, founder and CEO of Imagine Schools, a national program based in Arlington, Va., proclaimed that the environment created at the 100 Academy of Excellence is one that all children should experience.



Ted Watkins, president of the 100 Black Men of Las Vegas, stands with uniformed students at the 100 Academy of Excellence. The North Las Vegas school has more than 500 pupils.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

"Here, we are teaching children to take risks. This is a place where they may, at times, fail but are immediately equipped with the skills that they'll need to succeed if they do. Here, we're helping parents better educate their children."

Many other community supporters appeared for the event. Gubernatorial candidate Dina Titus sent a proclamation ensuring her support for the charter school program while Dr. Kenton Williams, president of the 100 Black Men of Las Vegas, presented one.

Clark County School District Trustee Shirley Barber made a promise to be visible at the school before saying, "I will do anything I can to make a positive difference here."

North Las Vegas Mayor Michael L. Montandon hopes that the charter school will bring more to its neighboring community.

"Giving more to [students] means giving more to the community. Our children will direct our communities someday. And the 100 Academy of Excellence will help prepare them for many of those responsibilities," he said.

There are plans for additional Imagine Schools in Las Vegas and North Las Vegas. High schools and middle schools will be constructed in the upcoming years to provide students beyond grade 5 and their parents with alternative options.

Charter schools are essentially public schools that are granted operational autonomy and are funded, in part, by private entities, along with district funding based on attendance. Like public schools, the child's education

is free. There are no discriminatory barriers to a child's acceptance into the school—it's open to every race and socioeconomic status of student.

Charter schools also work independently of school boards and districts. While they are required to meet traditional academic requirements, they may add culturally relevant subjects to the curriculum.

Due to the community surrounding the school, the majority of the children are African-American. But there are many Hispanics, Native Americans, as well as some Caucasians.

Principal Henderson said, "The school's population is very diverse. There are different ethnicities and income brackets. And being able to recognize and accept diversity is a great way for students to grow and learn."

The 100 Academy of Excellence is still accepting students for the school year. PTA President Kyele Dixon, who serves as a parent/volunteer, seeks 100 percent participation from parents and family members of the students.

"So far, there has been lots of support from parents and the 100 Black Men... Currently, there are 40 PTA Members but we are aiming for a goal of 1,000," said Dixon.

PTA Secretary Denise McIver said the school will be hosting several family events over the next few months: "Trunk or Treat," an event whose basis is safe trick-or-treating for children; Family Literacy, which will promote the importance of reading from the parental perspective; and "Fathers Frying Fish," a day of fam-

ily interaction.

The 100 Academy of Excellence Charter School appears to be heading in an extremely positive direction. "We're reaching for the moon," said Dixon, "but if we can't reach it, we'll definitely be floating amongst the stars."

With caring teachers and optimistic parents, enthusiastic sponsors and eager students, this program is sure to make its milestones.

Rock's mother eyes litigation

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) - Rose Rock, the mother of comedian Chris Rock, claims she was racially discriminated against when she was seated but ignored for a half hour at a Cracker Barrel restaurant along the South Carolina coast.

Rock said last Tuesday she planned to sue the Lebanon, Tenn.-based company. A Cracker Barrel spokeswoman said the restaurant chain was investigating and taking the complaint "very seriously."

Cracker Barrel has in the past faced numerous lawsuits and a federal inquiry over complaints of refusing to serve Black customers, discriminating against minority workers and firing gay employees. The company has taken steps to rebuild its folksy image and reach out to minorities.

Rock, who is from Georgetown, said she and her 21-year-old daughter were the only Blacks at the chain's Murrells Inlet restaurant in April. She said when she asked the manager about the delay she was told they could have a free meal.

"He never called over the waitresses and asked, 'Why did these people sit here for a half hour without service?'" she said. "The only thing he said was we could have a free meal, and neither of us wanted to eat."

Cracker Barrel spokeswoman Julie Davis said the company doesn't "tolerate any form of discrimination."

"It has always been a violation of our policies and procedures and it is neither condoned nor allowed," she said.

"We do not allow the type of behavior you are describing," Davis said.

Rock said she contacted the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission and was told her complaint would be handled, but "nothing ever happened."

The head of the commission, Jesse Washington, said

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It's Time.

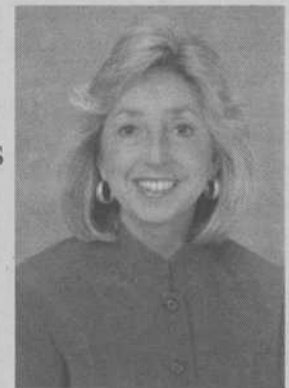
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