

Nevada worst in prison programs

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) - A report by the U.S. Justice Department ranks Nevada last when it comes to per capita spending on prison and justice system programs.

The report, provided to the Legislature last month, said Nevada in 2003 spent

\$147 on such programs per state resident, ranking the state 50th.

The amount spent was less than one-quarter of the \$621 spent by Alaska, which ranked first, and less than one-third of the \$478 spent in Delaware, which ranked

second.

The national average was \$228.

Nevada spent \$328 million in justice expenditures in 2003, according to the report.

But the Nevada Department of Corrections could increase the amount spent on such programs in the 2007 session of the Legislature.

The agency, which has not added many prison beds over the past few years, is expected to ask the Legislature for a huge increase in capital construction dollars to deal

with overcrowding and projected inmate growth.

The agency is seeking \$268 million for five construction projects in the upcoming session, including a 300-bed expansion of the Southern Nevada Women's Correctional Center at a cost of \$61 million and the addition of two housing units at the High Desert State Prison at a cost of \$51.7 million.

The agency has been recommended for 45 percent of the \$708 million two-year construction budget for the

next two years by the state Public Works Board.

By comparison, \$59 million, 14 percent of the total, was allocated to corrections for construction in the current two-year budget.

Outgoing Gov. Kenny Guinn, in his most recent budget calculations, said the growth in the inmate population for the coming two years will require an additional \$29 million in funding for new correctional officers and other expenses.

Guinn has also recom-

mended \$10 million more in one-time funding for modular housing units for up to 380 inmates to deal with short-term overcrowding problems at various correctional facilities.

Gov.-elect Jim Gibbons, who takes office in January, is evaluating and developing his own budget.

Incoming Assembly Speaker Barbara Buckley said the alarming numbers were the driving force to create the Select Committee on (See Corrections, Page 12)

Annual event nets shoes for children

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

The 12th Annual Shoes for Children Benefit is underway and will continue until December 18. All area Las Vegas Clark County neighborhood libraries are collection sites where the public can drop off new children's athletic shoes for needy students from preschool to high school age.

In addition to the open shoe drive, each year the Shoes for Children Benefit organizers provide an entertainment event where the admission cost is a pair of new shoes. This year's performance is a rendition of the musical play "Golden Boy" a Clifford Odets drama adapted into a musical theatre format put on the Ira Aldridge Theater Company under the direction of Walter Mason.

The special engagement, when the admission price is the donation of a new pair of athletic shoes for the children, will be held Friday, December 8, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. at the West Las Vegas Library Theatre at 951 West Lake Mead Boulevard. The play will have a three-day run. On Saturday, there is a matinee and an evening show. The Sunday finale is at 4 p.m.

The promoters encourage the public to bring shoes for the children's shoe drive collection box on any visit to libraries throughout the district now to Dec. 18.

The Shoes for Children Benefit was co-founded by local residents Joyce Thomas and Lou Collins, who saw a need and wanted to give back to the community. In addition, they wanted to promote literacy, encouraging children to become avid readers by attending their local libraries.

"Twelve years ago, Joyce Thomas, the [then-] manager at the West Las Theatre, and myself saw a need to assist the kids in West Las Vegas to receive new shoes for the holiday because everyone else was doing toy drives.

Growing up in the Black community, you realize that if you didn't have a decent pair of shoes when you went to school, you became a victim of what they call the 'Joneses', because so much emphasis are placed on a pair of shoes, and students not having a decent pair of shoes were embarrassed."

He added, "When we began the program, we were in contact with various elementary schools that came together and sung Christmas carols to entertain the audience at the shoe drive. The admission to the concert was a pair of new shoes."

Reflecting on the growth of the program, Collins said, "When we started this program, for the first four or five years, we had very little support from the corporate community. We were seeking buy in to support our efforts... from the beginning where we raised 100 shoes for needy children. Last year we were able to receive 4,000 shoes for our children. And over the years, the support from the community and corporate types has been phenomenal."

For the last five years, Jani Jeppe, the performing arts coordinator at the West Las Vegas Performing and Visual Arts Center, oversees the shoe drive operation at the West Las Vegas Library, and works with other libraries throughout the district collecting shoes for the needy students.

"This shoe drive has received tremendous support from the community, the library district and corporate sponsors over the past several years. We have partnered with Payless Shoe Stores," she said.

"We have raised money to purchase shoe coupons that we give to the families to purchase new shoes for their children. We also receive actual shoe donations that we distribute to the schools... in the community. We are supported by many organizations that utilize our facility,

(See Shoes, Page 7)

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