

Blige wins three Grammys



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Businessman and motivational speaker Stedman Graham encouraged students to do and be their best.

Stedman

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that he doesn't want to be a role model.

"I try to be careful about calling people my role models. I just take a little from everyone I know. I try to emulate others' strengths. If I surround myself with strength, I'll inevitably become strong."

To the African-American youth in Las Vegas, Graham said, "Don't be defined by your color, be defined by your talents. Translation: Don't let people make you a slave. You have more power than you realize. But you can't wait around for others to save you. There are four simple words that will rescue you: Read, knowledge is power! Everything else will take care of itself."

"As far as African-American males are concerned, to help them we must acknowledge them. African-American males have been emasculated. They've lost their strength because they don't lead their own lives. The Black community must help them create themselves, help them find their identity, so they can get their strength back."

Graham said his mission is to help people eliminate the barriers and beliefs that hinder positive performance.

"We have to see past class, history, gender, and sexual orientation."

"We invest in ourselves. And by investing in ourselves, we invest in our communities."

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Mary J. Blige had three early wins, including R&B album of the year for her comeback album, "The Breakthrough."

"For so many years I've been talked about negatively and this time I am being talked about positively by so many people," said a tearful Blige, who has often discussed her past substance abuse and negative self-image. She said the win showed that she had not only grown as an artist, but as a person.

Another tearful winner was Stevie Wonder, who dedicated his win with Tony Bennett for best pop collaboration to his late mother. They won for a rendition of Wonder's "For Once In My Life." The remake beat out huge new songs like "Promiscuous" and "Crazy."

"This is an amazing moment for me. It's amazing to know that I did this song when I was 17 a whole 'nother way, and to come back and do it with the great Tony Bennett..." he said.

Gnarls Barkley's two awards included a win for alternative music album. Another double winner was rapper T.I.

Blige also won best R&B song for "Be Without You," which was also nominated for record and song of the year. The Dixie Chicks, John Mayer, Justin Timberlake (with rapper T.I. for the song "My Love") also won one each.

Irma Thomas, known as



Grammy magnet Mary J. Blige performs a medley at the 49th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on Sunday.

the Queen of New Orleans Soul and a Hurricane Katrina survivor, was a tearful winner for best contemporary

blues album for "After the Rain."

"First of all, I want to say thank you God, and thank

you New Orleans — 49 years you believed in me, and it finally paid off," she said.

Ike Turner also picked up a Grammy, for best traditional blues album, which his son produced. "Wow, I really don't know what to say and I'm scared to death," said the rock pioneer of Ike and Tina (Turner) fame.

Blige, known as the Queen of Hip-Hop Soul, had a chance to become Queen of the Grammys on Sunday with a leading eight nominations for her best-selling, critically acclaimed album, "The Breakthrough."

While Blige was the overall Grammy leader, with eight nominations, there were several contenders for a Grammy sweep. Other contenders for album of the year included Timberlake, for his futuristic sounding club disc "FutureSex/LoveSounds"; and "St. Elsewhere" by Gnarls Barkley who had one of the year's most infectious tunes with the psychedelic sound of "Crazy," and the group was rewarded with four Grammy nominations, including a record and song of the year nomination for the tune.




WYNN-ING WOMAN

Kimora Lee Simmons (left), executive of the Baby Phat urban apparel company, joined hip-hop philanthropist/activist Russell Simmons (not pictured) on Tuesday night at Tryst nightclub in Wynn Las Vegas to celebrate of the Phat Farm clothing label's 15th Anniversary. Phat Farm is credited with launching a worldwide urban apparel industry that generates billions of dollars annually and includes clothing labels owned by hip-hop luminaries like Sean "Diddy" Combs and Sean "Jay-Z" Carter.

Photo special to the Sentinel-Voice by Marty Frierson






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