

# Community center 'S.E.T.' to welcome youth

By Kanika Vann  
Sentinel-Voice

Friday will be an exciting day for many parents and students living in Las Vegas' Historic Westside community, as the S.E.T. 4 Life Community Youth Center, located at 1307 D. St., has its grand opening. The founders are introducing the community to the center's purpose, as well as to seek out qualified candidates for acceptance into its programs.

The center will provide snacks and lunch, and offer tutoring, mentoring and various programs to 20 selected students every Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and to all community youth, on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The program, operated by founders David and Latoya Anderson, husband and wife, caters to at-risk, inner-city students between the ages of six and 18. The Andersons, in a phone interview, told the *Sentinel-Voice* that the project is one "that had to be done."

Latoya Anderson said, "We are committed to providing a safe place for at-risk youth. And we are very committed to attaining excellence from the students that we mentor."

The youth center, whose doors officially open Monday morning, will offer an impressive array of programs used to educate students while they are away from school for summer vacation.

One program, Knowledge is Power, is designed to encourage reading. Among the other programs are: Game Time, Work It Out, I Know I Can, Street Smarts, and I'm Worth It, which is a sex education program tailored toward teenagers at the youth center.

Latoya Anderson stated: "We want to challenge the minds of these young men and women. We will do all we can to boost their self-esteem, educate them on the dangers of gang activity, encourage them to read, uplift their characters, and enhance their social learning skills. This community center, while it tutors students, teaches them about life skills. Reading is a life skill, decision-making is a life skill.

These are things they need to be taught. Our goal is to make sure that the students that we accept into the program are eventually equipped with these skills."

The Andersons, who are biological and foster parents, will allow their oldest children, ages 12 to 14, to volunteer at the center this summer.

"Our children were home schooled," Latoya Anderson said, "and allowing them to volunteer simply allows them to understand the obstacles that other children face everyday. I want them to be grateful for the lives they've led, but also be mindful of the struggles and pressures present to others. And, hopefully, they can help en-

courage the students participating in the summer program."

As of now, the center will operate directly from the Anderson's own funds and the donations given by parents and other contributors.

"We didn't apply for grants or state funding because we didn't know about any of it. We just wanted to give some kids a place to go. In the summer, they just ride their bikes up and down the street or hang out on the corners doing nothing. The center will allow us to give them structure, allow them to re-enter school in August, better equipped for learning," she said.

Her background is in education; her husband has a criminal justice background.

The couple said they planned to take participants on trips and invite guest speakers to the facility. Since many of the children's families are low-income, the program is offered free of charge.

They are accepting donations and volunteers from the community.

The camp will not be held just in the summer, accord-

ing to the Anderson's plans. It's simply a start to what they hope will grow to become a city-wide and, eventually, a state-wide program.

"We have a summer-specific program right now, but will alter it according to the need of the community when school reopens in the fall," they both said.

With the program, the couple hopes to help improve the grades of the students, support them, and help strengthen the surrounding community by producing better students and, thereby, better citizens.

"Hopefully, they'll develop a love for reading," said Mrs. Anderson. "Because, although the phrase is cliché, knowledge is power! We want to keep them away from gangs. We hope to help them see that they have options, help them realize that they have choices. And above all, we want to elevate their self-esteem, because it's important to be proud of yourself."

The Andersons said they pray that each program, and the youth center as a whole, is successful. "We know that

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## Eagles

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For Black males, the percentage rises to 18 percent compared to 14 percent of White males.

Founded largely as a mentoring group, the 100 Black Men of America Inc. now employs a strategic program of mentoring, education, health and wellness and economic development in order to attack the negatives.

"We continue to hear about increasing dropout rates, but not in our programs," said Dotson.

"We continue to hear about increasing incarceration rates, but not in our programs... We continue to hear about increasing homicide statistics, but not in our programs. Sure we can challenge those statistics, but clearly there are real problems in our communities... But there are demonstrated solutions through our programs."

Dotson pointed to the organization's 110 chapters as examples of success.

"Look at the Maryland chapter of the 100. Five years ago they took a known crackhouse and turned it into their [2,400 square foot] headquarters," he said.

"Then there's the success of our host chapter right here in Las Vegas. They've partnered with a group of teachers to form the 100 Academy of Excellence."

He noted that former Secretary of State Colin Powell had visited and addressed children of the Las Vegas chapter, headed by Dr. R. Kenton Williams.

Most 100 programs are for male and female youth. However, each chapter takes action to meet the specific



Photo special to the Sentinel-Voice by Marty Frierson

100 Black Men chapters from across the country brought hundreds of their mentees to Las Vegas for the national convention. Many mentees competed in an academic contest.

needs of their communities. The Atlanta Chapter, headed by Darrell Fitzgerald, is preparing to open a high school for Black males.

The high profile people who have joined, partnered with or attended the 100 conventions may indicate the growth of the organization but, moreover, how seriously its mission is being taken.

Among award winners were House Judiciary Chairman U.S. Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., man of the year; Time Inc. Executive Editor Sheryl Hilliard-Tucker, woman of the year; and rising leaders of the year, filmmaker Kiri Davis and actress, entrepreneur Camille Winbush.

Lead speaker Mackie is a noted scientist, educator and motivational speaker from New Orleans; BET journalist Jeffrey Johnson, Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates, Actor Bill Cosby and educator Michael Erik Dyson have also worked with the 100.

General Motors was among the primary sponsors for this year's conference.

"The 100 Black men is such a positive, action-oriented organization that is really seeking and actually doing, in terms of addressing challenges facing the African-American community," said GM Vice President Rod Gillum.

"Their outreach to boys and young men is especially significant. In fact, I can't even think of another organization that does it as well."

But, no indicator of the 100's success is greater than the continued dedication of its former presidents to the organization and to its mission, says Dotson.

He pointed to founding president, Dr. William Hayling, the second president, Nate Goldston and chairman emeritus, Tommy Dortch, all of whom were in the audience. Wax statues of each of them were unveiled during the conference.

"I think this speaks not only to the dedication of the gentlemen that have previously led this organization, but also to the compelling nature of our important mission."

Telling a parable of an eagle who thought of himself as a chicken, Dotson says adults must believe in the youth and teach them to believe in themselves.

The key is vision, coupled with action, Dotson told the audience before a standing ovation:

"We can look within ourselves to help more eagles soar. We can look at the youth in this room, at the youth in our programs, and we see increased graduation rates.

"We see youth focused on healthy lifestyles and becoming literate in financial matters. We see young people concerned about their communities, young people taking control of their futures because of Black men who care."

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