

Small businesses eyed for municipal program

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Clark County government will teach 50 to 75 small business owners about bid preparation and other aspects of working with the county through a new mentoring program designed to help them better compete for municipal contracts. Owners will also be paired with mentors from larger firms.

County Commissioner Lawrence Weekly will formally launch the program during an afternoon kick-off event from 3 to 5 on Dec. 27 in commission chambers at the Clark County Government Center, 500 S. Grand Central Parkway.

The program is open to all small businesses, which are defined as non-construction companies with annual gross receipts at or below \$2 million, or a construction company with annual gross receipts at or below \$5 million. Only businesses within the county can apply.

"Small businesses are the backbone of the business community," Weekly said. "They are essential for workforce stability and growth and provide a necessary diversity to our private sector. By helping them, we help

ourselves build a better and more sustainable local economy."

The program, which is free for the participants, will be administered by business consulting firm Akers & Associates. The company has done business with the county for more than 12 years. Classes will be held once a month for 12 months beginning in January.

"While Nevada leads the nation in several economic categories, it lags behind the nation in small business development, which is vital to new job creation and diverse economic growth in any community," said Tom Akers, instructor and president of Akers & Associates, Inc.

"This program is designed to build a strong, diverse and viable small business community that can only add to the powerful engine driving the prosperity of all Nevadans."

Interested small business owners may obtain program applications at the event or through Akers & Associates representatives Juana Hart or Tammy Whitehead at (702) 866-2316.

FAMU pharmacy students net perfect record on exam score

By Nikkia G. Ganey

Special to Sentinel-Voice

When students at the Florida A&M University College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences raise their index fingers and say, "We're No. 1," they mean it.

They have set the standard for pharmacy schools across the nation with a 100 percent passing rate on the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination.

FAMU's school average

score of 119.15 exceeded the state and national averages of 118.77 and 116.00 respectively.

The state passing rate was 98.22 percent and the national rate was 97.23 compared to FAMU's 100 percent.

"We are excited about our students doing so well on the exam," said Dr. Henry Lewis III, dean of the College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. "This proves that our faculty is working

hard to prepare our students for their careers."

The NAPLEX is an examination that is mandatory for all students who are graduating. The test is a standard examination created by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy to help individual state boards of pharmacy assess an individual's competency and knowledge so that he or she may be given a license to practice.

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Despite overall drop in crime in Los Angeles, Hispanic-Black tensions are brewing.

L.A. crime rate plummets, police relations improve

By Betty Pleasant
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Long awaited, crime statistics in Los Angeles are reportedly — and surprisingly — falling fast under the current police department administration in Los Angeles. In this two-part series, Part I looks at the numbers and improved police-community relations since Police Chief William J. Bratton took post; Part II is a look inside the ways the administration, community members and law enforcement worked together for crime reduction and better policing.

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) - The winds of change are blowing all

over Los Angeles. The hyper-aggressive, paramilitary Los Angeles Police Department, noted for brutalizing the city's African-American and Latino communities, is changing.

The high, capricious murder rate that lulled the citizenry into a doomed sense of "here today, gone today" is changing.

More than 50 years of the city's chafing under the past-chief William H. Parker-designed hookin'-and-bookin' policing policies are changing.

The change agent here is Police Chief William J. Bratton, who says: "We're just getting started."

In the five years Bratton has been police chief, crime

has gone way, way down and residents' trust in and respect for the LAPD have gone way, way up and movement is continuing in both directions. In the city overall, officials say crime has dropped to the lowest levels in recorded LAPD history, going back to 1940, when the department began collecting reliable data.

Statistics show that half the city's homicides routinely occur in South Los Angeles. And unless some deranged person launches a killing spree there during the next three weeks, homicides in South L.A. this year will be the lowest anyone has *(See Police, Page 10)*

Justice

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After pressure from the New York City Council, the New York Police Department commissioned the RAND Corp., a think tank, to look for ways to reduce the risk of "reflexive" or "contagious" shooting by its officers.

A week before the one-year anniversary of the Bell killing, however, NYPD officers in Brooklyn fired 20 shots at 18-year-old Khil Coppin, who had been diagnosed with a mental condition, hitting him at least 13 times. He died at the scene.

New York City Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum told reporters after the fifth and final hearing of a panel created after Bell's shooting, known as the Tri-Level Legislative Task Force on Police Procedures, that "something

is terribly wrong" with the way police conduct themselves. "There's a lack of kindness," she said. Gotbaum's daughter-in-law died in September while in police custody at Phoenix International Airport.

The panel, which includes state, city and federal elected officials, held its first hearing in January and concluded its work on the first anniversary of the shooting.

Gotbaum admitted the Bell shooting hit closer to home after her daughter-in-law's death. "I was always interested in the panel, and I was interested in the issue because I represented people who have been affected by bad police behavior," she said at the hearing, according to media reports.

The NYPD continues to

argue that its statistics show that officers are more restrained these days, claiming officers fired 540 shots in 2006, down 13 percent from 616 shots in 2005. In 1996, the total was 1,292 shots fired. The NYPD also reports nine people were killed by officers so far in 2007. In 2006, there were 13 fatal shootings, up from nine in 2005. In 1996, there were 30 deaths at the hands of police, reportedly.

A Quinnipiac University poll, taken after the killing of Coppin, showed 55 percent of New Yorkers approved of the way Police Commissioner Ray Kelly is performing his duties, 30 percent said they disapproved and 16 percent were undecided.

His approval rating was 52 percent after the killing of

Sean Bell. Whites favor Kelly, with 70 percent saying they thought he was doing a good job, compared with 42 percent of Blacks and 36 percent of Latinos.

Police shootings aren't the only target of community anger and scrutiny. Another reason the police department commissioned the RAND report was to counter complaints by Blacks and Latinos that NYPD's stop and frisk policy was racist. Blacks comprised 53 percent of those stopped, 29 percent were Latinos and 11 percent White. More than 500,000 people were stopped for questioning in 2006, according to police department statistics.

While the study acknowledged that Blacks were stopped at a rate 50 percent

greater than their representation in the census, RAND argued that using the census as a benchmark was unreliable because it didn't factor in higher arrest rates. Critics say that 90 percent of those stops in 2006 did not lead to an arrest. RAND also argued that NYPD's tactics were race-neutral.

The National Latino Officers Association of America told reporters the

"study is comprised of endless excuses, and statistical justifications."

Anthony Miranda, a retired NYPD sergeant and executive chairman of the NLOA, said, "The report draws conclusions that have no basis in reality. If left unchallenged, it is the justification for racial profiling, abuse and discrimination."

Saeed Shabazz writes for the Final Call.

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