

Local student charting course for success

By Martine Ramos
Special to Sentinel-Voice

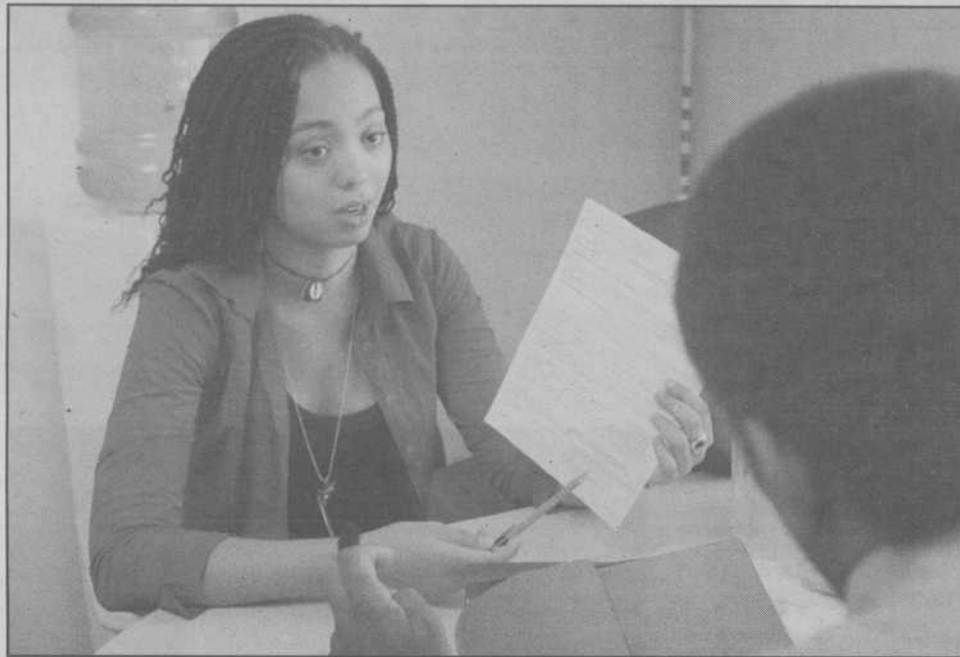
The Clark County Summer Business Institute knows how to pick them, and they pick them well. Apparently, so does the United Negro College Fund when selecting a Gates Millennium Scholarship recipient. Chantal Jones, a graduating senior at the Las Vegas Academy of International Studies, Performing and Visual Arts, is one of only 1,000 students in the United States to be awarded this highly sought-after prize for 2008.

For the past two summers, Jones has been employed at the Clark County Office of Diversity as an intern in the Clark County Summer Business Institute.

Therese Scupi, the director, worked closely with Jones during the 2006 and 2007 SBI sessions. Scupi said that even though Jones was hired to handle clerical duties, Scupi immediately recognized Jones' superior talents and was able to bring her in on more substantive tasks.

"Chantal performed exceptionally well in every area," Scupi said. "I was able to expose her to some highly sensitive cases handled by the Office of Diversity. She is mature far beyond her years, and I valued her insight, initiative, and well-thought-out opinions."

Scupi said that she revised some training packets during Jones' time at SBI, and the teen was very helpful in that project with her artistic talents and knowledge of software applications.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Chantal Jones has achieved a lot in a short time. In addition to being a part of the Clark County Summer Business Institute, Jones also won the Gates Millennium Scholarship.

"Chantal is very professional, poised, punctual and dedicated," Scupi said. "I did not know of her winning the Gates Millennium Scholarship, but I am not surprised. Chantal has demonstrated to me that she is quite analytical and logical in her reasoning. I would be very happy if she would decide to join me in the legal profession. She is reflective of great promise for the future."

The United Negro College Fund administers the Gates Millennium Scholars Program in partnership with the Hispanic Scholarship Fund, the Organization of Chinese Americans, and the American Indian Graduate Center Scholars.

The Gates Millennium Scholars initiative, funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is aimed at expanding access

and opportunity to higher education to those citizens who will help reflect the diverse society in which we live.

The initiative seeks to increase the number of African-Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Asian Pacific Americans, and Hispanic Americans enrolling in and completing undergraduate and graduate degree programs. The goal is to promote academic excellence and to provide an opportunity for thousands of outstanding students to reach their fullest potential.

The program has funded over 10,000 Gates Scholars since the inception of the program. Jones, a tall, outgoing, genuinely friendly art aficionado, virtually bubbles over when talking about the award. She was notified of winning the scholarship in

early May, after months of completing applications and filling numerous squares beginning in 2007.

"I'm not exactly sure who nominated me," Jones said. "I know we (the students in the art classes) voted for each other. We nominated people based on technical skills, before and after-school participation, and things like that. I think Ms. Mabel made the final decision."

Kelly Mabel has been teaching art at the Academy for seven years. During the school's annual senior awards program on May 9, Mabel talked about Jones' abilities.

"There were several people involved in the recommendation process," Mabel said. "The teachers and school counselors usually find out what scholarships are available and en-

courage the students to apply for them. In 16 years of teaching art, I've never seen a more hardworking, well-rounded student. Chantal is technically adept, personable, and an incredible role model for the other students. It was an easy choice to direct her toward the Gates Millennium Scholarship."

Jones' mother, Consuella Durden, said her daughter is a product of family members, extended family and mentors.

"Chantal has been a shining light from day one. Luckily we recognized that light

and continued to nourish it. She is my baby, she is a winner, and she continues to make us proud."

Jones graduated from the academy with a 4.63 weighted grade point average. She will attend Arizona State University in the fall to study art.

Other successful graduates of SBI include Maryanna Kihuen, who interned with Sen. Harry Reid and went on to graduate from Georgetown, and Ambrose Sayles, who interned for Sen. Hillary Clinton and graduated from Harvard.

Jail

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we bring into our custody should be protected."

Curtis Knowles, head of the county's correctional officers union, said that union lawyers advised him not to comment on the case because of the investigation. He urged people not to reach any conclusions before the investigation had run its course.

Corrections officials have said White had no visible signs of trauma on his body when guards bringing him a meal found him slumped on the floor next to his bed about 10:30 a.m. He had been checked 15 minutes earlier and appeared to be well. A preliminary autopsy by the state medical examiner in Baltimore ruled the death a homicide and found two broken bones in his neck.

None of the seven guards or an unspecified number of supervisors who could have had contact with White have been suspended or placed on leave during the investigation, according to Vicki Duncan, spokeswoman for the corrections division.

White had a prior criminal record that included serving time for drug charges.

Members of his family did not attend a news conference Tuesday held by their attorney, and they could not be immediately reached.

Findley, 39, was a 10-year veteran of the county police force. A funeral has been scheduled for this week, and Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley ordered state flags to be flown at half-staff until then.

SBI

"SBI represents a collaborative effort between the division and the local business community."

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Community Resources Management Division.

"SBI represents a collaborative effort between the division and the local business community. The focus of the program is to give youth opportunities to experience the corporate environment from working inside."

All students must have at least a 2.0 G.P.A. to apply and are required to provide a transcript. Qualifying students then go through an interview process. SBI features an eight-week internship, beginning in early June and ending in August, two weeks prior to the start of the school year.

Bell said, "The students

are required to work Monday through Thursday, eight hours a day, 32 hours per week and are paid \$8 per hour."

On Fridays they attend informational workshops with various guest speakers.

Students are taught life skills that emphasize resume building, financial management, dressing for success, interaction with co-workers, how to build business relationships, and numerous other adult survival skills. It also includes business mentoring and a civic engagement project.

Bell said that SBI is different from other programs because the students are exposed to the actual adult

working world. The curriculums were designed by The National Endowment for Financial Education in partnership with Cooperative Extension Systems, America's Credit Union and UNLV. The workshops are taught by professional instructors complemented by invited guest speakers.

"We partner with Clark County School District and numerous local businesses to give students first-hand opportunities to experience the professional world. On the application, students are asked to identify their career choices. We try to place students, as much as possible, within their areas of interest. In this way students can see

if they would be a good fit in a particular area. This generally tends to foster their interests and reinforce their commitment, or sometimes lets them know they should direct their interests elsewhere."

Although Clark County manages the program, the participants don't work only at the Government Center, but in various fields.

"We have employers and 'businesses throughout Clark County where a student may be placed to work. They perform on-the-job training at their job sites where a supervisor provides them with meaningful projects," Bell stated.

Sponsors for this year's

program include UNLV, National Security Technology, Friedmutter Group, Regional Transportation Commission, Venetian Foundation, Station Casinos, Wells Fargo Foundation, and Palm Mortuaries. There are more than 30 corporate sponsors in all, in addition to individual mentors.

Bell said, "This turns out to be a positive experience for all involved. We do a massive outreach to generate interest among students. We go out to the high school counselors, local professional businesses, and advertise on the radio. We have had much success during the history of SBI."

Hundreds of students apply each year for SBI. Bell

said approximately 400 students apply annually for about 100 positions. Those who are not selected, but remain eligible are encouraged to apply again the following year.

"When you teach people to lead from the bottom up, they give back to the community," Bell said.

"We're not sending people to work at McDonald's. We're fostering vision. You never know what you can achieve until you're exposed to something better."

For more information about the Clark County Summer Business Institute, contact Kaveida Allen at 455-2426 or 455-3097.