



Singer Charlie Wilson pictured with his wife, Mahin.

## Former Gap Band member healthy

WASHINGTON (AP) — He's best known as the lead vocalist for the Gap Band. Now Charlie Wilson is raising his voice to narrow the knowledge gap about prostate cancer. Wilson, who was diagnosed last fall and treated with radiation implants, says he's in remission.

The singer wants to serve up a dose of knowledge along with the funk when he tours to support his new solo album, "Uncle Charlie," due out Feb. 17.

He's urging men, especially African-Americans, to get tested. Black men are at an increased risk of prostate cancer overall.

It was during a routine physical last September that a blood test turned up signs of prostate cancer. A biopsy and follow-up examination confirmed the diagnosis.

When Wilson heard his doctor utter the word cancer, "I just felt devastated," he said.

But Wilson also noticed that his doctor "had this little smile on his face" as he delivered the news. The reason, he said, was because his doctor told him: "We caught it early enough and we can knock it out."

# Essence festival thick with stars

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The Essence Music Festival has plenty to celebrate this year.

And it will be about a lot more than music, said Michelle Ebanks, president of Essence Communications Inc.

The festival, slated for July 3-5, will include events marking the festival's 15th anniversary and President Barack Obama's inauguration.

Headliners for the festival — billed as one of the nation's largest annual events celebrating Black music and culture — will include Beyonce, John Legend, Teena Marie, Al Green and dozens of others.

There also will be a tribute to Bishop T.D. Jakes, the Dallas pastor who gave an Inauguration Day sermon in Washington.

Obama spoke at Essence two years ago, when he was campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination.

The format for this year's festival will be the same as in years past:

Ticketed musical performances are slated at night

and free empowerment seminars will be held during the day.

The musical lineup also includes Robin Thicke, Anita Baker, Eric Benet, Ne-Yo and Salt-N-Pepa.

"That's the wonderful thing about Essence," Ebanks said. "It's not one particular genre of music. It's a celebration of the music of our lives, of all the music that we know and love."

More musical acts may be

added in coming months, she said.

The festival began in 1995 as a one-time celebration of the 25th anniversary of *Essence* magazine.

In honor of Essence's 15th anniversary, the festival is offering a 15 percent discount on select tickets through Friday. General admission tickets range from \$51 to nearly \$175.

Ebanks said the festival's 15 years of success is "a real

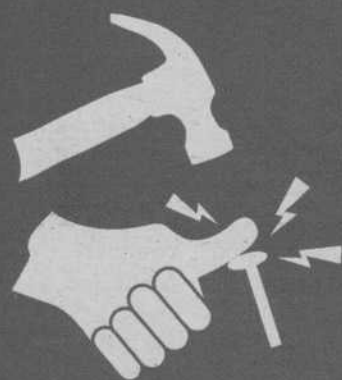
testament to the legacy of the brand," which she says "was designed with such care."

An estimated 200,000 people attended the festival in 2007, the year it returned to New Orleans after being held in Houston in 2006 because the city was still recovering from Hurricane Katrina.

The festival had one of its biggest turnouts last year with more than 270,000 attendees.



Al Green poses with his awards after winning Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals and Best Traditional R&B Vocal Performance at the 51st annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on Sunday. Green will be headlining in New Orleans this year.



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