

# NAACP NEWS

Newsletter of Alexandria, VA Branch #7043

Fall 2009

## NAACP discusses education issues

By Joyce Sanchez and Sallie Craft

On June 22, 2009, the Alexandria Branch NAACP held an open community forum to address concerns centered around the Alexandria City Public School System. The branch had received several complaints from teachers, administrators, parents and students. Some of the complaints were: job retention held by African American administrators and teachers; parents concerned about excessive suspensions and African American students drop-out rate; students complaining about a lack of lectures at T. C. Williams and teachers passing out worksheets to students instead of teaching. The student complaints came from members of the Alexandria Branch NAACP Youth Council. A student from the council wrote to the superintendent to address some of his complaints. Because of the above issues, Rev. Dr. Lee A. Earl, Branch President and members of the Education Committee have met with Dr. Morton Sherman, Superintendent of the Alexandria City Public School System (ACPS), to address our concerns and how they could be resolved.

Rev. Dr. Lee A. Earl, Joyce Sanchez and Sallie Craft, co-chairs of the education committee and others met with Dr. Sherman on July 28 to discuss several education issues. One of great concern was the publically posting of test scores by race in each school.

Dr. Sherman assured the group that his intent was not to degrade a particular group but to let the teachers and staff know what they needed to do to improve the education of all students. Rev. Earl assured him that posting the scores in the public eye in each school in full view of the students was not the proper way to alert the teachers and staff of their duties.

Other issues were centered around the following: equality in hiring and retention; equality of

opportunity; equality of access and equality of education results. The superintendent stated that changes were already in place. No longer will principals have the authority to select teachers on their own. A panel will be set up for the interviewing process. This process, hopefully, will bring in a better quality of diversified teachers. Stephen Wilkins, Executive Director of Human Resources, was charged with seeking more minority teachers to reflect the racial makeup of the student population.

On August 4, Dr. Sherman invited members of his staff, several Alexandria's African American leaders and others to an early morning breakfast. An educational report given by Monty Dawson, Director of Student Accountability, reflected the poor performance of African American students. The gap gets wider once the students start middle school.

On August 31, Sallie Craft attended a meeting at the School Board on "Breakthrough Thinking" for the possibility of starting a Parent Academy in the Alexandria Public School System. This was a brainstorming session with about thirty persons in attendance. The main questions were, "What brought you here?" and "What do you want for each and every Alexandria City Public School Child."

### **REV. DR. LOWERY TO SPEAK AT BANQUET**

Rev. Dr. Joseph Echols Lowery, renowned civil rights leader, will be the speaker at the Annual Membership & Awards Banquet of the Alexandria Branch NAACP on October 25, 2009. The event will be held at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center, 5000 Seminary Road in Alexandria beginning at 6:30 p.m. The theme will be "Celebrating a Century (1909-2009)".

After Rosa Parks' arrest in 1955, Lowery helped lead the Montgomery bus boycott. He headed the Alabama Civic Affairs Association, an organization devoted to the desegregation of buses and public

places. In 1957, with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Lowery founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and subsequently led the organization as its president from 1977 to 1997.

At the request of Martin Luther King Jr., Lowery led the Selma to Montgomery march in 1965. Lowery is a co-founder and former president of the Black Leadership Forum, a consortium of black advocacy groups. The Forum protested apartheid in South Africa in the mid 1970s until the election of Nelson Mandela.

In 2004 Rev. Lowery was honored at the "International Civil Rights Walk of Fame" at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, located in Atlanta, Georgia.

On January 20, 2009, Dr. Lowery delivered the benediction at the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

On August 12, 2009, President Obama presented him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the United States. It is designed to recognize individuals who have made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security for the national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors."

The Mistress of Ceremonies will be A. Shuanise Washington, founder and principal of Washington Group, LLC. (information technology and services industry) and founder and CEO of Washington Solutions, LLC (management consulting industry).

At this occasion, the branch will recognize persons in the community who have volunteered their time and service to the citizens of Alexandria.

Tickets are \$75.00 each. Call 703-577-6533 or 703-684-6190 (voice)

## **VIRGINIA STATE CONVENTION 2009**

The Virginia State Conference NAACP will hold its 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention October 23-25 at the Richmond Marriott at 500 East Broad Street. The theme will be "NAACP: We are 100, The Legacy Continues".

Candidates running for office are: President - Rev. Dr. J. Rayfield Vines, Jr. (Henrico) and Mr. L. J. McCoy (Chesterfield).

Vice President: Mrs. Sylvia C. Wood (Richmond), Mrs. Lucy Cordell Wells (Henrico).

Secretary: (no petition filed)

Treasurer: Mrs. Rovenia Vaughan (Powhatan)

At-Large Member Elected by the Convention:

Mrs. Janette Martin (Charlottesville), Rev. Joseph Brown (Hanover), Mr. Carl D. Cooper (Roanoke)

Schedule of activities at a glance: Friday, Oct 23- registration, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.; first plenary session, 9 a.m.; concurrent workshops, housing and EEOC, 10 a.m. - 12 noon; membership luncheon, 12:30 p.m. with speaker Dr. Lance Watson, Pastor, St. Paul's Baptist Church, Richmond, VA; concurrent workshops, membership and How to Utilize the Media, 3-4:30 p.m.; concert with Larry Bland and the Volunteer Choir, 6:30 p.m.; "Meet the Candidates" for public office, 8:30 p.m.; youth talent and fashion show, 9 p.m.: Presidents and delegates welcome reception for adults and youth, 10 p.m. Larry Bland, a native Richmonder, has directed the Volunteer Choir for over 40 years which is based at the Second Baptist Church in Richmond.

Saturday, Oct 24 - 'Centennial Breakfast and candidates campaign speeches, 7:30 a.m.; registration, 8 a.m. -5 p.m.; first youth plenary session, 9:15 pm.; concurrent workshops - education and health, 10:30 a.m. - 12 noon; leadership luncheon (invited speaker: Rev. Dr. Nelson B. Rivers, Director, NAACP Branch & Field Services); second plenary session and election of officers and at-large member, 3 p.m.; youth town hall meeting "Face to Face With the Police: How to Advocate for Yourself", centennial gala/banquet and formal dance, 7 p.m. (No speaker); youth black history game show, 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, Oct 25 - Youth and College Division sponsored Unity Breakfast, speaker: Rev. Shaun Jones, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Baptist General Convention of Virginia, 7:30 a.m.; memorial service, 9 a.m.; and final plenary session, 10 a.m.

Prices for adults - Package deal \$225.00 or registration only \$75; membership luncheon \$40; centennial breakfast \$30; leadership luncheon \$40; centennial gala/banquet \$65 and unity breakfast \$30. Deadline for advance registration is Oct 1. All resolutions for consideration at the state convention are due Oct 1. The president's and secretary's signature must appear on the resolution and include the date the resolution was accepted by the general membership of the branch.

The primary sponsor, Dominion Virginia Power, donated \$10,000.00 for the Convention. Managing Director of External Affairs and Corporate Communications Chet Wade stated that "support for the Virginia State Convention is an ongoing partnership and even in tough economic times we will continue our support."

## **COOK BECOMES CITY'S FIRST BLACK POLICE CHIEF**

Earl L. Cook took over as Alexandria's first black police chief Aug. 25 when he accepted the appointment from City Manager James K. Hartmann and gave a press conference at City Hall.

Cook a 30-year veteran of the department, has been acting chief since July when then-Chief David P. Baker was arrested for drunken driving in Arlington County. Baker, who retired July 28 after the arrest, pleaded guilty and served five days in jail.

Cook is a native Alexandrian who grew up in a public housing complex with six brothers and sisters. His neighbor and childhood friend was William D. Euille, the city's first black mayor.

In 1988, Trevor Thompson interviewed with Vola Lawson, the city manager at the time, and won the job, according to a city spokesperson. He would have been the city's first black police chief had the city not found out that he was simultaneously interviewing for another job in Durham, N.C. Lawson called Thompson and he withdrew his name from the running that night.

For three years, Cook has been second-in-command for the department, which has about 400 officers.

"It is an awesome responsibility to be a police chief," Cook said Aug. 25 in a tearful speech at City Hall that recalled his childhood and several friends and relatives who have died over the years.

"His local roots make him uniquely qualified for this position," Euille said.

He played for the newly integrated T.C. Williams High School football team that was later depicted in the 2000 movie, "Remember the Titans". A black coach took over the racially divided football team in 1971 leading it to the state championship with the help of a white assistant coach.

Cook graduated from Duke University with a bachelor's degree in history and education, then returned to Alexandria to join the police academy in 1979. He was a patrol officer and worked in criminal investigations for 10 years, then was promoted

widely viewed as an alternative that could help slow the foreclosure epidemic. In theory, delinquent homeowners escape a mortgage they cannot afford, and lenders, although taking a loss, avoid the even costlier process of completing a foreclosure.

Instead, many homeowners are watching

several times until he became assistant chief. In 2006, he became Baker's deputy executive chief after they both competed for the top job.

## **OFFICER AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Branch President Rev. Dr. Lee A. Earl has been assisting the leaders of the Concerned Citizens Network of Alexandria set up their Board and launch the organization.

**LEGAL REDRESS:** Chair S. Howard Woodson, III, Esq.

Assistance from the branch was requested in the following matters: man complaining about the police coming into his house and taking his children because their mother called the police to report that he (the father) would not return them; woman claiming police are harassing her because she continually drives with a suspended license; woman claiming alleged judge, jury and police officer bias against her son who was convicted of robbery and sentenced to 25 years; alleged insurance company discrimination; alleged area restaurant discrimination; alleged assault by a police officer, etc.

**HOUSING:** The first-time homebuyer credit provides up to \$8,000 for first-time homebuyers. The purchaser must qualify as a first-time homebuyer, which for purposes of this credit means someone who has not owned a primary residence in the past three years. If the taxpayer is married, this requirement also applies to the taxpayer's spouse. To qualify, the home purchase must close before Dec. 1 and the credit may not be claimed on the purchaser's tax return until after the taxpayer closes and has purchased the home...

Scores of homeowners who thought they'd cut a deal with their banks to sell their houses for less than their unpaid mortgages are seeing those agreements fall apart months later, contributing to the mounting foreclosures that threaten the housing market's recovery.

The sales of home for less than the amount owned the bank, known as "short sales", have been

potential buyers walk away as months pass while they deal with lenders' lengthy delays, lost documents and unreturned calls, according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR). Not all the snafus are lenders' fault; inexperienced real estate agents who fail to turn in complete paperwork also

are causing holdups, as are severely underpriced homes.

Just 23% of short-sale offers that homeowners receive from potential buyers actually close, according to a February study of 1,300 real estate agents by Campbell Communications. More than 90% of agents cited a slow response from the lender as the reason short sales were lost.

Many short sales are faltering, largely because some lenders may lack the internal staffing, expertise and systems to process such sales in a timely fashion. And short sales can be complex, especially if they involve home-equity lines of credit or other second liens held by different lenders, who also must agree to take less than the amount they're owed from a home's sale.

Uncompleted short sales that go to foreclosure are costlier for lenders and homeowners. For lenders, a short sale may save as much as 30% of the expense incurred by going to foreclosure.

For homeowners, a foreclosure wreaks longer-lasting damage to their credit records. A homeowner who has gone through a short sale typically can get a new home loan in one to three years, according to the NAR. A foreclosure usually means it takes seven.

Borrowers are expected to pay their mortgage during the short-sale process, but not all can afford to. That leads to abandoned properties that may sit vacant and deteriorate for months. In other cases, homeowners unable to make their payments may stay put and pay nothing, in some cases for up to a year, until the lenders' review-and-approval process plays out.

The Treasury Department soon will detail a plan to streamline short sales by providing standardized documentation and cash incentives to lenders and a moving allowance to homeowners.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Membership table was set up at African Heritage Cultural Festival at City Hall on July 25 and One Love Community Festival at Braddock Park on Aug 29.

**HEALTH:** Nancy De La Cruz, who helped organize a health care reform rally at the Northern Virginia office of U.S. Senator Jim Webb (D-Va.) on July 2, distributed information about President Barack Obama's health care reform at our Sep 2 general membership meeting. The NAACP supports health care reform that includes an expansion of coverage to all Americans and eliminates racial health care disparities.

**ARMED FORCES & VETERANS AFFAIRS:** The branch's annual Veterans Day Program will be

held Nov 11 at the Alexandria Black History Museum, 902 Wythe Street, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. The guest speaker is yet to be announced...

## CALENDAR

Nov 3 - General Election - Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Virginia House of Delegates; Commonwealth's Attorney and Sheriff

Dec 2 - Annual meeting to receive and act upon annual reports from the Officers and Chairpersons of Standing Committees and to Vote for National Board members

Dec 5 - Deadline for newsletter articles

Dec 12 - Alexandria Branch hosts Area 15 meeting (OPEN TO ALL NAACP MEMBERS). 10 a.m. Location TBA



Dr. Lowery, NAACP Lifetime Achievement Award winner 1997 – Story page 1



Chief Cook – Story page 3

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