

NAACP NEWS

Newsletter of Alexandria, VA Branch #7043

Summer 2010

ACT-SO winners are Kansas City bound

By Jeanette Lightfoot

Six Alexandria youth have won the honor to represent the local NAACP Branch and Youth Council at the National ACT-SO competition during the annual NAACP convention in Kansas City, MO from July 8 to July 12. The students and their respective categories are:

- Kaylynn Charity - poetry
- Taki Kenney - playwriting
- Roscoe Lewis - drawing and painting
- Tamyra Lewis - dramatics
- Beatrice Thomson - dramatics, playwriting, vocal contemporary music
- Lois Wilkerson - poetry and oratory

The Academic, Cultural, Technological, Scientific Olympics (ACT-SO) is an enrichment program, developed in 1978 by the late journalist Vernon Jarrett, designed to recruit, stimulate, improve and encourage high academic and cultural achievement among African-American high school students. Each year approximately 800 youth from across the country compete at the National ACT-SO in 25 categories in the areas of sciences, humanities, performing arts, visual arts and business.

Each category offers students the chance to win gold, silver and bronze medals along with cash awards of \$2,000, \$1,500 and \$1,000. ACT-SO national winners may also receive laptop computers, financial awards from major corporations, college internships and apprenticeships.

Famed ACT-SO alumni include author Tannarive Due, actress Jada Pinkett-Smith, filmmaker John Singleton, and comedian/actor Anthony Anderson.

Please join us in congratulating our winners!

To make a contribution to the ACT-SO travel fund or get more information about ACT-SO, contact

Jeanette Lightfoot at 703-768-8450 or Jennifer Lightfoot at 703-963-6211.

NAACP PLANS TO MOVE IN NEW DIRECTION

As the NAACP gathered in Hollywood, Fla., May 27-30 for its sixth annual Leadership 500 Summit, its president Benjamin Jealous said the 101-year-old civil rights organization is moving in a new direction to draw younger members and to go beyond black issues.

Leadership 500, NAACP's official "young adult" wing, is the brainchild of association chairman Roslyn Brock, who says she conceived the idea to give a means of entry to civil rights activism to anxious young people who'd been lamenting that they wanted to participate but couldn't get past the organization's "gray wall."

Indeed for the first time in NAACP's history, more than a dozen large chapters nationwide have presidents who are white, Latino, Native American or Asian. In May, the NAACP joined the legal battle against Arizona's controversial immigration law, which some view as discriminatory against Hispanics.

The vast majority of last year's five percent membership increase to 600,000 nationwide, was comprised of 20-, 30- and 40- somethings.

Jealous himself recently turned 37, and NAACP chairman Roslyn Brock is 44, making them both members of Generation X.

And the percentage of 20- to 40-somethings making up NAACP general membership has risen from 14 percent to nearly 25 percent over the past 10 years.

"Last year our membership - paid memberships - went up by five percent... in a recession," Jealous

said, following a town hall-style meeting at Westin Diplomat on May 29.

“As for our diversity, people forget that our founding chairman was a white woman.”

Conventioneers attended workshops led by corporate, government and military authorities, including federal judges, a U.S. Army brigadier general, an FBI agent and retired National Security Agency director and a host of Internet entrepreneurs who boasted seven-figure revenues and higher.

Perhaps most unique were the recurring themes of redefining civil rights issues and peacefully changing the guard of NAACP leadership, so that younger members can shape its identity.

One of the most attended workshops was not about race but rather about healthcare reform.

Panelist Christ Foster, of the global strategy firm Booz Allen Hamilton and a healthcare administration expert, said healthcare reform was a new civil rights battleground - one of major importance to African Americans but one “all Americans have a stake in, too.”

“What we will see moving forward will be a very different level of advocacy, engagement and accountability as we move towards the implementation of the legislation. Implementation will spark additional dialogues and call for us to challenge assumptions and our core values. This will help our young people remain very active and involved in healthcare moving forward,” Foster said.

At Saturday’s town hall gathering, Edwin V. Avent, publisher of Heart & Soul Magazine, urged African Americans to become environmentalists and advocate for clean food sources and waterways.

Avent warned that the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico will impact tens of thousands of ethnic minorities living in the region.

“Today’s African American is facing different things than 60 years ago,” Avent said.

Steve Benjamin, a NAACP board member, and the 40-year-old mayor-elect of Columbia, S.C., told a group Friday afternoon that he recruited voters and support through social networks like Facebook instead of telephone books to unseat a powerful incumbent and become the city’s first black mayor.

Benjamin said he also won votes from other ethnic groups by focusing his campaign on issues important to Americans of all backgrounds: “the economy, jobs, insurance and so on.”

As the NAACP draws younger members, the most difficult mission facing the organization will be

keeping its core mission - fighting for civil rights for blacks - while taking on new battles.

NAACP PRESIDENT JEALOUS ENCOURAGES INVOLVEMENT, OPENNESS TO UNEXPECTED ALLIANCES

The President and CEO of the NAACP told a crowd of about 140 people at the Robert Russa Moton Museum in Farmville, VA on April 30 to find a cause to better their community and take action. In doing so, Benjamin Todd Jealous reminded everyone not to assume who will be supporters and who will be opponents, but to be open to unexpected alliances.

Jealous spoke on the topic of “Leadership for the Next Generation” during his presentation at Moton, sponsored by Our Schools, Our Vision, a partnership of Hampden-Sydney College, Longwood University, Prince Edward County Public Schools, Fuqua School and the Moton Museum.

Jealous encouraged those in attendance to find a cause and pledge “before I depart this earth this is the change I want to make in this country.”

He pointed to the successful efforts of a 16-year-old girl who decided to abolish the death penalty for juveniles after reading an article in USA Today newspaper while at work at a fast food restaurant, and the unexpected support of a white Mississippi businessman in the successful fight years ago to keep two of the state’s Historical Black Colleges and Universities from being closed and being spurned by what they assumed was a liberal crowd.” We make a critical mistake that day,” he said. “We assumed we knew who our allies were.”

Moton Director Lacy Ward Jr. said it was encouraging to hear Jealous call for the formation of non-traditional alliances in addressing community challenges.

“He was essentially speaking to the work of the Our Schools, Our Vision partnership, and the partnership’s efforts at improving educational performance for all children,” Ward said. “Mr. Jealous delivered a great message, to a receptive audience.”

Jealous said he was eager to speak at Moton “because museums like this are very important to remind us in the right way. When we were triumphant; when we were coming together.”

Jealous aid the NAACP’s efforts continue to be needed today and its successes are more far reaching

that some can imagine. “We start with problems as they affect the black community but generally they benefit many more people,” Jealous said. “Our solutions are not about black people. They are about benefitting the community.”

“Our job is to knot together the body of this country.”

The Robert Russa Moton Museum is located at 900 Griffin Boulevard, Farmville, Virginia. It is the site of the April 23, 1951 student walkout, led by 16-year-old junior Barbara Johns, in protest of inferior educational facilities. The Moton strike launched Prince Edward County’s 13-year struggle for Civil Rights in Education and resulted in the filing of *Davis v. Prince Edward*, which called for an end to racial segregation in public education. *Davis* was decided, along with four other cases, in the landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board Supreme Court* decision.

The museum is establishing a permanent exhibit that will trace Prince Edward County’s 13-year struggle to establish an integrated school system. The exhibition will be in place by April 23, 2011, the 60th anniversary of the student protest. It will offer the only place in the Commonwealth where visitors can come to understand the processes by which in public education.

MCDONNELL REVISES RESTORATION OF RIGHTS FOR NONVIOLENT FELONS

Nonviolent felons can apply for restoration of their voting rights sooner after they complete their sentence and could get a faster answer - potentially in 60 days - under procedures outlined May 21 by Gov. Bob McDonnell.

The governor also added an item to the application for nonviolent felons that gives them the option to describe any community service or comparable service they want to bring to his attention.

It’s a marked difference from an earlier proposal that the administration considered - to require applicants to write a letter explaining the circumstances of their conviction, any community service, and why the restoration is justified.

Civil rights groups had assailed that idea as a throwback to a time of literacy tests, which impeded voting.

McDonnell imposed a 60-day deadline for his administration to act on an application once all of the

required documentation is received from the applicant and the courts.

The governor also reduced to two years from three years the time nonviolent felons must wait to apply for restoration of rights, and he cut to one year from two years the waiting period for reapplication if a request is denied.

Since taking office in January, McDonnell has acted on about 195 applications from violent and nonviolent felons and granted restoration to about 175 of them, according to figures from the governor’s office.

McDonnell set a July 15 deadline for action on the 650 applications left from the Kaine administration. Violent felons applying for restoration of rights must fill out a longer application and meet additional requirement.

McDonnell has received about 400 applications for restoration of rights since taking office.

The feasibility of a 60-day decision depends on how long it takes to gather information from the courts and other agencies, which can prolong the process.

To find ways to expedite that exchange, the administration created a working group with the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, court clerks, the attorney general’s office, Virginia State Police, the Department of Corrections, and civil rights groups.

Virginia and Kentucky are the only states that leave the restoration approval solely with the governor.

OFFICER REPORT

Branch president Rev. Dr. Lee A. Earl gave a prayer at the opening legislative session of the Virginia General Assembly. At our general membership meeting in May, he disagreed with Gov. Bob McDonnell’s designation of April as Confederate History Month and expressed concerns about the Confederate Memorial on Washington Street in Old Town Alexandria.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

Assistance from the branch was requested in the following matters: age discrimination, legal matter dealing a car dealer, allege civil rights violation,

police brutality, termination of a teacher, racial epithet and suspension, etc.

POLITICAL ACTION: Branch Vice President Everett A. Lewis attended President Barack Obama's speech on healthcare reform at George Mason University's Patriot Center on Mar 19...

Patrick Murray defeated Matthew Berry in the 8th District Republican primary on June 8 and will challenge Rep. Jim Moran (D) in November.

YOUTH WORKS: Jeanette Lightfoot, Advisor.

On May 21 Markevia Bell and Jennifer Lightfoot took three members (Beatrice Thomson, Roscoe Lewis and Tresjuan Richardson) of the Alexandria NAACP Youth Council to Philadelphia, PA to meet with Rev. Elisha B. Morris and the Philadelphia NAACP Youth Council (PNYC). They attended the PNYC Skating Party fundraiser, strolled down South Street and enjoyed their first Philly cheese steaks. On the next day, the youth briefly toured Philadelphia and participated in the PNYC HIV/AIDS Health Workshop/Discussion. They joined the Philly youth for food and games at Dave & Buster's restaurant before leaving. The two groups agreed to collaborate on future outings and projects.



Left to right: Markevia Bell, Beatrice Thomson, Roscoe Lewis, Tresjuan Richardson, and Jennifer Lightfoot.

JOB FAIRS

(at Washington Convention Center, 801 Mount Vernon Place, NW. All free and open to the public. No registration required. www.psjjobfair.com)

July 29-31th, National Urban League Convention. July 29 and 30th - 10:30 a.m.-5 p.m. and July 31 -10:30 a.m.-4 p.m. www.nul.org

Sep 16-18th, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Conference www.cbcfinc.org

CALENDAR

July 11th - Membership drive at Alleyne AME Church, 1419 King Street

July 11-15th, 101st Annual Convention in Kansas City, Missouri. Theme: "One Nation, One Dream".

Aug 21th - One Love Festival. Braddock Park. 1005 Mt. Vernon Avenue. NAACP Membership table set-up. 12 noon- 8 p.m. 202-285-1240

Sep 1st - Elect Nominating Committee for upcoming branch election to be held in November

MARCHES AND RALLIES

Aug 28th - Sponsored by the Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network in Washington DC. for anti-violence, immigration, education, criminal justice, decency, etc.

www.nationalactionnetwork.net

Oct 2nd or 10th (tentative) - NAACP, Service Employees International Union and other labor unions in Washington, DC for job creation, etc. www.naacp.org

NAACP-Alexandria

Post Office Box 1740

Alexandria VA 22313

703-684-6190

naacpalx@erols.com

www.naacpalexandriava.org

President: Rev. Dr. Lee A. Earl

Secretary: R. Theresa Hillian

Newsletter Editor: Everett A. Lewis,
Captain, U.S. Air Force Retired