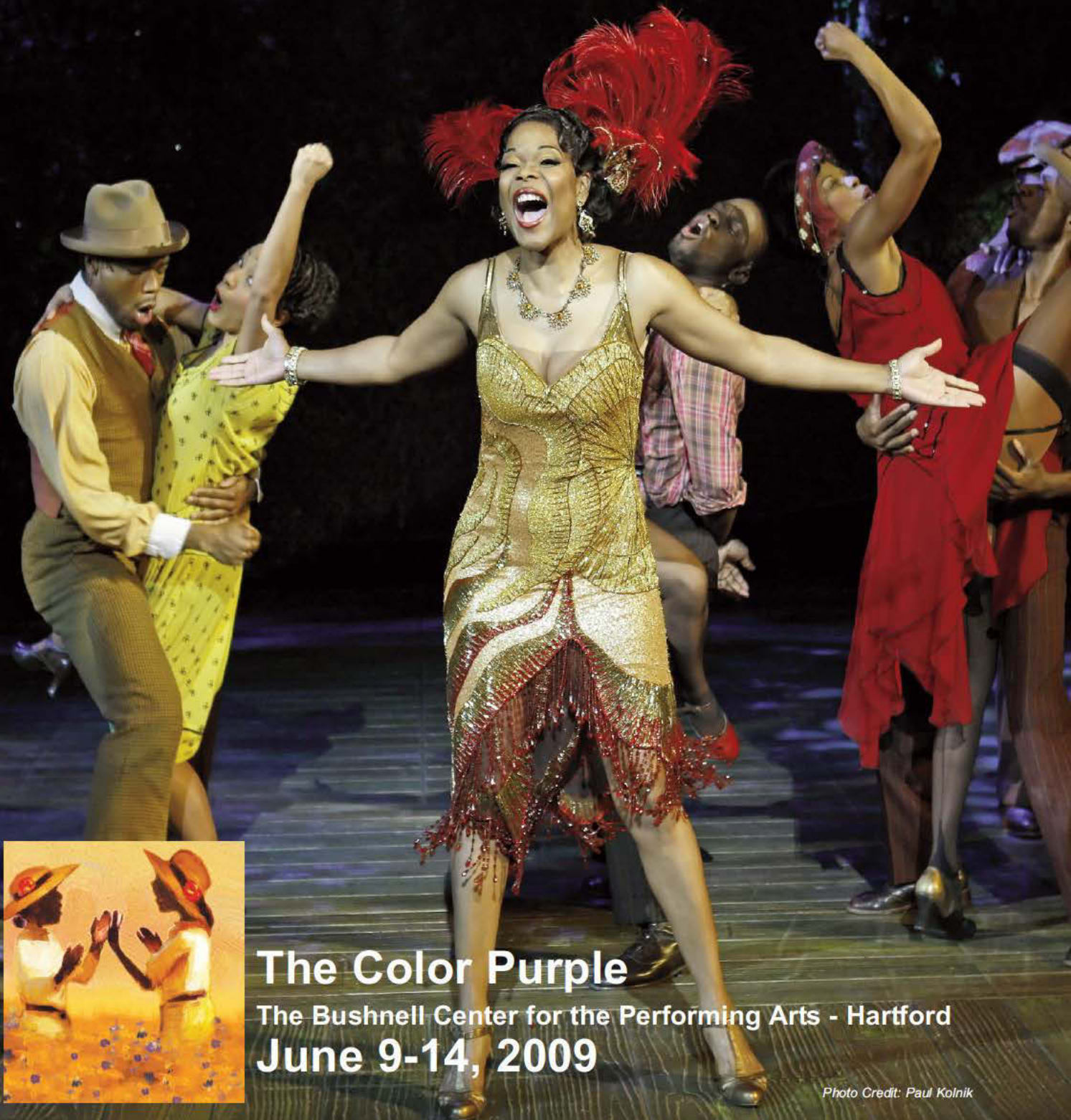
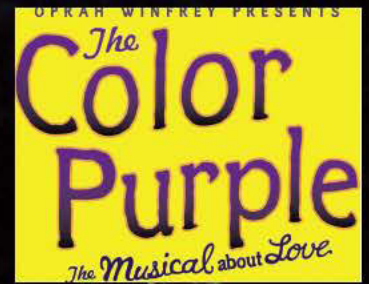


Unity First

Volume 15 Number 3

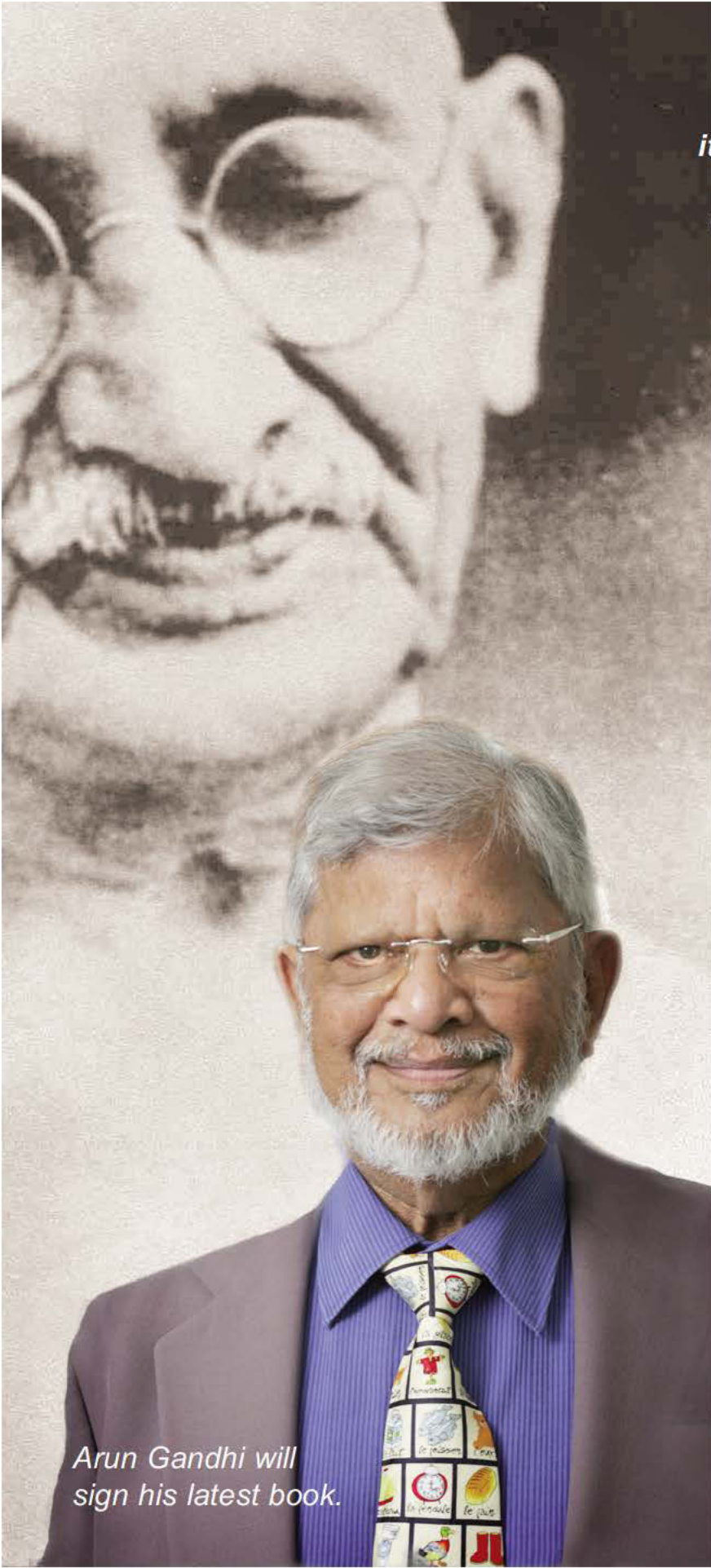
April/May 2009



The Color Purple

The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts - Hartford
June 9-14, 2009

Photo Credit: Paul Kolnik



*Unity First invites you to
its global leadership celebration
honoring those people in our
communities who inspire new
generations of success.
Let's celebrate our collective
ability to be the change
that our children and
communities want to
see and believe in.*

June 4, 2009

5:30 pm

Speaker:

Arun Gandhi

grandson of Mahatma Gandhi

Location:

**Pan African Historical Museum
Springfield, MA**

Tickets

(required in advance)

Children (10-17): \$10

Adults: (dinner only): \$25

**Adults: (dinner, book and special
gift): \$50**

FOR TICKETS

Call (413) 734-6444 or
request via email:
tfondon@unityfirst.com

*Arun Gandhi will
sign his latest book.*



The Color Purple at The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts - Hartford

PUBLISHERS/FOUNDERS-
UNITY FIRST NEWS online
JANINE AND TOM FONDON

CONTRIBUTORS

Special Section Editor/
Another Voice
Editor - Tammy Sharif
Mable Lene Sharif, columnist

Special Section Consultant
Patricia Spence

Unity First News Online

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 80837
Springfield, MA 01138

Street Address:
682 Sumner Avenue,
Springfield, MA 01108

Phone (413) 734-6444

Email:

editors@unityfirst.com

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THE AMERICAN STROKE ASSOCIATION'S POWER BOSTON FRIDAY, MAY 15

Power Boston 2009 is a multicultural celebration of Power To End Stroke®, The American Stroke Association's campaign to raise stroke awareness among communities at greatest risk for stroke.

JOIN US FOR TWO EVENTS:

1

MAKING THE STROKE CONNECTION

THE BOSTON SHERATON
7:30am - 2:00pm • FREE EVENT



Emceed by
7NEWS Reporter
JANET WU

Professional Education Symposium

7:30am - 12pm

For Physicians, Physician Assistants, Nurses,
and EMS Personnel

Survivor and Caregiver Forum

8:30am - 12pm

For Stroke Survivors
and their Caregivers

FORUM TOPIC:

**MORE
BANG
BUCK**
for your

Power to the Public Education Session

8:30am - 12pm

For Power To End Stroke® ambassadors, public health
& community health practitioners

Annual Awards Luncheon

12:30pm - 2pm

Recognize those who help reduce risk, disability and
death from stroke and honors those who have made
a difference in our community

RSVP: WWW.HEART.ORG/MTSC

2

Stroke's No Joke Comedy Show

NICK'S COMEDY STOP • 8pm-10pm
Tickets \$30 to benefit the American Stroke Association



Emceed by
**JAM'N
94.5's
RAMIRO**



Music by
**JAM'N
94.5's
DJ PUP
DAWG**

Featured Comedians:



HOST
COREY MANNING



LAMONT PRICE



DESHAUN PARKER



STEVE DONZWAN



CHRIS TATE



KELLY MCFARLANE

www.heart.org/strokesnojokeboston

RSVP: POWERBOSTON@HEART.ORG
OR 508.656.2041

MEDIA PARTNERS:



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You are the Power

The United States
Cable Group
Partnership is a
National Sponsor of
Power To End Stroke®

INspire

There are always events happening around the Commonwealth that inspire us. Shown are several inspiring moments that demonstrate the opportunity to do great things for



Janine Fondon recently interviewed American Idol's Reuben Studdard before his Boston appearance in "Ain't Misbehavin'."



Essence Editor in Chief Angela Burt-Murray (second from left) recently visited The Mother Caroline Academy and Education Center. Donna Gittens of Causemedia (far left), Mother Caroline President Ingrid Tucker (second from right) and Unity First's Janine Fondon (far right) also welcomed her.



VOTE ...VOTE...VOTE...VOTE...VOTE for.... the Museum of African American History

Take some amazing history, add a pinch of "American Idol," mix it all up with the importance of preserving our past and you have the makings of a contest that the Museum of African American History (MAAH) wants to win. The prize? A share in a million dollar grant from American Express. The campaign for public votes runs through May 17, 2009. You can vote for the Museum once a day every day! To vote for the Museum of African American History, go to www.maah.org or www.partnersin-preservation.com. Gathered at the kick-off to the Partners in Preservation Campaign in support of the Museum of African-American History's Abiel Smith School are: Kelley Chunn, Principal, Chunn & Associates; Beverly A. Morgan-Welch, MAAH Executive Director; L'Merchie Frazier, Director of Education; Diana Parcon, Manager of Capital Improvements and Facility Operations; and Scott McDuffie, Development Associate. Photo Credit: Nathan Fried-Lipski.



Janine and Tom Fondon joined 106.1's Charles Clemons in the studio to talk with him about his Walk for Power to D.C. See page 22.



Unity First celebrated with Carole Copeland Thomas (center) during her Diversity Conference at Bentley College. Congrats Carole Thomas this was a great conference. See page 24.



Unity First joined Carol Weinstein (second from left) and Calvin Levels (center) following his signature performance of the play highlighting the life of James Baldwin. See page 25.



The Color Purple...at Hartford's Bushnell June 9-14

Photo Credit: Paul Kolnik

The Color Purple is one of the world's classics and should not be missed. The story is memorable and the talent truly lifts the story off the page. The show will be in Hartford, Connecticut in June so save the date for a performance not to be missed.

The Color Purple is a Broadway musical based upon the novel "The Color Purple" by Alice Walker. The musical had a history-making run on Broadway now travels via this national tour.

The story, set in the 1930s, is powerful with gripping scenes

that tell the story of a young African American girl named Celie who is forced to separate from her beloved sister and live with a troubled man who steeps to abuse to solve his problems.

In a great turn of events, this story documents the engaging stories of empowerment and redemption as well as the revival and acceptance that takes the audience on an exciting ride to truth and salvation.

The character Celie finds her own inspirational transformation thanks to the help of her friends and a miracle in the making that is revealed by her sister.

Lynette DuPree who plays Sofia in the Hartford presentation enjoys her role playing the strong and outspoken character.

"I have found my creative inspiration in the deep roots of gospel," notes DuPree who has performed in several Broadway plays from "Smokey Joe's Cafe" to "Bring in da Noise Bring in da Funk". She has also

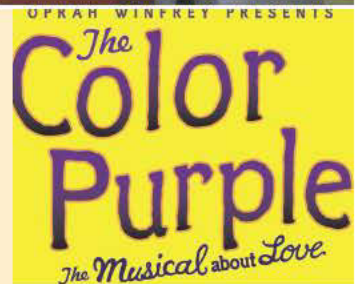


Lynette DuPree

Photo Credit: Paul Kolnik

appeared in many television programs from ER to Medium and Law and Order.

DuPree emphasizes that her role as Sofia, is empowering: "I like the fact that Sofia is a



woman who is ahead of her time and that she doesn't conform to the traditional roles. In that time, people were not comfortable with an outspoken woman who is comfortable with herself.

"Today, this role reminds us all that it is dangerous to be ahead of our time -- because people sometimes will hate you and bring you down simply because they don't understand you. I love telling Sofia's story eight times a week because she is a real reminder to be true to yourself and accept others."

American Idol's LaToya London plays the role of Nettie, Celie's sister.





Photo Credit: Paul Kolnik



LaToya London

LaToya London, who was the fourth-place finalist on the third season of the reality/talent-search television series *American Idol*, also enjoys her role starring as Nettie in the touring company of the Broadway musical, *The Color Purple*.

London who began singing at age four continues to live her dream. In fact, she had her first public musical performance when, at the age of seven, she sang in her mother's wedding.

She was already in the midst

of a move to Los Angeles when she learned about the *American Idol* audition. She decided to go for it. She slept on the ground for three days, got the audition and luckily, made it to a top spot.

When it came to performing in a theatrical presentation, London says, "I never had any theatrical experience besides being in the Nativity play at church. I never knew what to expect, and how my performance would be received.

Today, as she plays the role of Nettie, she says, "I have truly

grown into this character and in the, I have learned a lot about myself. Nettie is very optimistic as she learns about and wants more out of life. Like Nettie, I want to reach others and give back."

The *Color Purple* is filled with the stories we need to know today and tomorrow.

Get tickets today

1. To purchase tickets online go to: www.bushnell.org
2. Call (860) 987-5900.
3. Visit the box office at The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts - 166 Capitol Avenue Hartford, CT 06106
4. For groups of 20 or more, call 860-987-5959.



Photo Credit: Paul Kolnik



MoreJazz makes a difference

The TJX Companies, Inc. recently sponsored the Greater Boston Morehouse College Alumni Association's Glee Club Concert and MoreJazz Gala at the Old South Church and Westin Copley Place Boston to help raise scholarship funds for Boston area students to attend Morehouse. The Greater Boston Morehouse College Alumni Association (GBMCAA) also provides educational development opportunities for Boston area students through scholarship and mentorship programs. The Morehouse College Glee Club embraces a 90-year tradition of musical excellence and achievement. During the moving concert at Old South Church, Sean Daughtry, outgoing President of the GBMCAA, thanked Gala Chair Jerome Smalls for his leadership. Congratulations to the following students (shown below) who received scholarships: Harrison J. Barnes, Thony K. Ferdinand, David L. Finklea, Michael C. Okosi, Caleb E. Samuels, Stanley J. Smith and Reginald S. Williams. Also shown below are Jerome Smalls, VP/Director of Community Relations, The TJX Companies, Inc., Sean Daughtry, President GBMCAA, with this year's awardees and incoming GBMCAA President Hassan Williams (right of Jerome Smalls).



Jerome Smalls

Sean Daughtry

Taking the Lead

The Program for Women in Politics and Public Policy

Join other women from around Massachusetts, the nation, and the world in a challenging and exciting learning environment designed for women who want to make a change—and make a difference! Discover your public passion, develop your intellectual capacity and leadership skills, and meet women from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds in an environment that features both academic excellence and professional development.

Whether you are a graduating college senior, a professional seeking to change careers, a woman with ambitions for a master's or PhD level degree, or are returning to academia after some years, the Graduate Certificate Program for Women in Politics and Public Policy may be right for you.

The program's academic focus is on the careful study of governmental structures and political processes, the effects of public policies on women, and the roles women have played in politics, policy formulation and implementation. The role of gender in politics and policy-making is central to the program's design, goals, and curriculum. To earn the certificate, students must complete six courses, including two core seminars, two



courses on public policy research methods, and a two-semester internship.

Financial Assistance

Over 50% of the women who enter the program work full-time to support themselves and their families. For some, completing the 200-hour internship component of the program means losing income. Women from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups frequently need tuition assistance in order to participate

in the program. Established in 1992, the Betty Taymor Fund has provided scholarships each academic year to women in the program who have demonstrated academic excellence and a commitment to public service, as well as financial need. For more information, see the ad below.

Make a Change, Make a Difference

Every day, political decisions are made that affect women's businesses, educational opportunities, and quality of life.

Think we need more women making these decisions?

Think about the Program for

Women in Politics and Public Policy

It's a one-year graduate certificate program at UMass Boston:

- awarding eighteen graduate credits in Public Affairs
- offering conveniently scheduled classes and public policy internships
- affiliated with the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies
- winner, 2005 Innovative & Creative Programming Award, University Continuing Education Association, New England chapter

To learn more, contact Donna Stewartson:

donna.stewartson@umb.edu • 617.287.6785
www.mccormack.umb.edu/cwppp/edu

**JOHN W. MCCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF POLICY STUDIES**

Women's Fund of Western
Massachusetts holds conference:
*"Innovative Voices:
Crafting a New Agenda
for Leadership"*

9

The Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts gathered many innovative and inspirational voices for their recent annual conference. Carla Oleska, Executive Director of The Women's Fund, said, "The innovative voices around us are the leaders -- and each of us must find our place of leadership."

A wide range of conference speakers also addressed the theme of leadership. Donna Bivens, a diversity, inclusion and equity consultant who led a session about diversity encouraged attendees to develop leadership practices that allow you to move through barriers -- and to make full use of your emotional and spiritual intelligence."



Carla Oleska



Donna Bivens



Next generation

10

Essence Editor visits Boston's Mother Caroline Academy and Education Center

Angela Burt-Murray, Editor of Essence Magazine, recently visited Boston's Mother Caroline Academy and Education Center (MCAEC) and wowed the students. Her discussion with student groups ranged from Rihanna and Chris Brown to how to become an editor at a top magazine. MCAEC President Ingrid Tucker also invited Mother Caroline supporters and members of the community to a fundraising luncheon in support of the school. Mother Caroline Academy was founded in 1993 as a tuition-free middle-school for girls.



Angela Burt-Murray(left) and Ingrid Tucker(right)



Chris Brown and Rihanna: What Do Girls REALLY Think?

A survey commissioned by GIRL SCOUTS OF THE USA through the BUZZ MARKETING GROUP has uncovered some interesting news regarding the reactions of girls to the highly publicized Chris Brown and Rihanna incident: 95 percent of girls surveyed say Chris Brown's alleged actions are not acceptable or justifiable for any reason, and 48 percent believe that low self-esteem will be the primary reason for Rihanna getting back with Chris Brown.

However, it seems Boston teens do not reflect the nationwide view among girls. The Girl Scouts of the USA uncovered that a majority of girls - nearly 59 percent - hold Chris Brown responsible for what happened, followed by 33 percent who place the blame on both Rihanna and Chris Brown.

Girl Scouts of the USA commissioned the study to ensure girl's voices were accurately represented and to stress the importance of self-esteem among girls.

"Girls are now telling us loud and clear - it is not OK to hit a woman," says Tina Wells, CEO of Buzz Marketing Group. "That doesn't mean they don't sympathize with both parties. The girls are looking at the situation from all angles and understand that no one knows what really happened. They like Chris Brown - he is an idol for younger girls - and it was hard for them to believe at first."



This painting is one of four Jazzi Jeri's Series: c. 2007, Alvida Victoria Martinez-Anaya, "Reggie Workman", Jazzi Jeri's Series, Watercolor and Charcoal on Watercolor Paper. Photograph Credit: Stephen Petegorsky.



By artist Barbara Stroup. This quilt is called Tropical Heat.

"Radiant" -- an international celebration of women artists

On Sunday, April 26, 2009, artists from Western Massachusetts will exhibit in the show entitled, "Radiant: Women of Color and Colorful it is." The exhibition will take place at the Art for the Soul Gallery, located at 235 State Street, Classical Atrium, in Springfield, MA. Rosemary T. Woods, Art for the Soul Gallery owner noted that an opening artist reception will take place on April 26 (2 - 6 p.m). "Admission is free, but come early, for there are 10 participating artists, with a wide medium of art," says Woods.

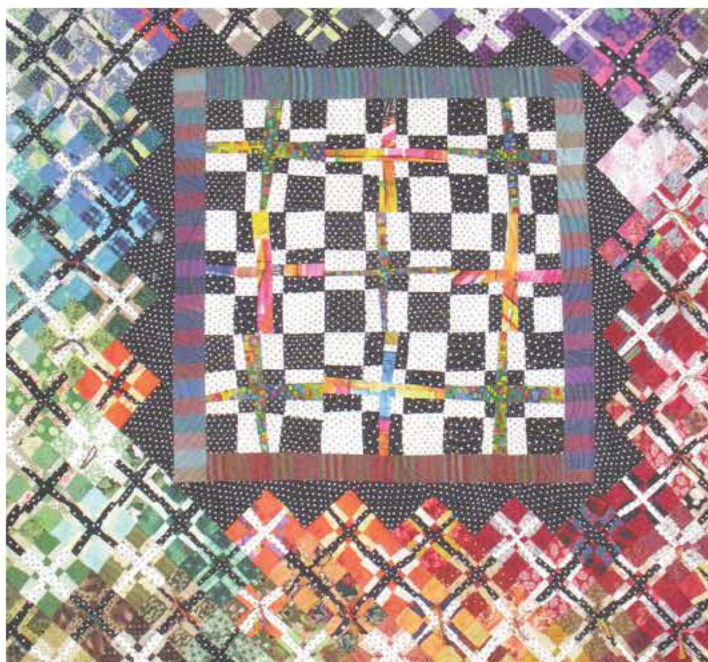
This event is part of a new international celebration of women artists called SWAN Day (Support Women Artists Now Day). "Women artists are inspiring," said Martha Richards, the co-founder of SWAN Day. "They can touch our deepest emotions or take us on a journey to a distant place or time. This day of celebration will help peo-



Rosemary T. Woods

ple imagine what the world would be like if women's art and perspectives were fully integrated into all of our lives. The long term goal of SWAN Day and the Women of Color Exhibition is to inspire communities to recognize and support women artists as a basic element of civic planning." From the ancient culture of quilting, (which Barbara Stroup will present a future gallery talk on "The Art of Quilting") to figures in clay and cloth, with

Continued on next page



Barbara Stroup will exhibit her quilts at the exhibition. This quilt is called *DoubleCrossed*.

renowned dollmaker Belinda Lyons-Zucker. The exhibition is one which will include all mediums, artist of all ages and ethnic backgrounds.

Nineteen-year-old Angela Silva, who is from Peru, will exhibit her photographs of Peru, which she had the opportunity to take while on Spring break last year. Cynthia Cox, graduated from the Life Skills Program at Central High School in 2000. Cynthia started her artistic career as a way to connect herself to the events that were happening around her, and the challenges she faces.

Guest Curator Alvida V. Martinez-Anaya states "People need to recognize how many women artists are doing wonderful work," she said. "Radiant" is an exhibition that is much needed and long overdue."

SWAN Day is an annual event taking place on the last Saturday of Women's History Month (March) and the surrounding weeks. Art for the Soul Gallery usually hosts women of color exhibitions in March, but decided to extend its celebration and recognition. The exhibition will run from April 26, 2009 until June 12,

2009. Participating artists include: Helene Silver, Springfield, Joan O'Reilly, Longmeadow, Angela Silva, formerly of Peru, Barbara Stroup, Springfield, Sunanda Sahay, Acton, Pam Goncalves, Lowell, Gail Hormats & D. Christine Benders, Worcester, Cynthia Cox, Springfield, Theodora Leilani McGeoghegan, Springfield, Belinda Lyons-Zucker, Amherst, Caren Carter-McKenzie, Springfield, Glenda Brooks, Northampton, and the Phoenix Arts Project Artist, Springfield.

Guest Curator: Alvida V. Martinez-Anaya, Gallery Assistant, Angela Silva. Refreshments will be provided by the Putnam Culinary Art Department.

Music will be provided jointly by Caren Carter-McKenzie and Jana Byrdd, of Springfield. In addition, a poetry reading will be given by deLinda Brown Jagne, guest poet.

For more information, please send an email to: artforthesoul@verizon.net. Also, please call (413)231-4598.

GRAND OPENING OF

12

JELUPA Productions, Inc.
Fortifying Life through the Arts!

May 1, 2009

7:00 pm – Reception & Art Exhibit
8:00 pm- Showtime

339 State Street. 3rd Floor
(At our new theater, studio and office located
at the Basilica in Springfield, MA)

by John McCallum
Contemporary African
American Comedy



Long May She Wave --

The inhabitants of a boarding house find themselves about to lose all their utilities because tenants have not paid the elderly landlady the rent on time and thus she couldn't keep up with the electric bill, etc. As things get sticky, the landlady proves to be quite a resourceful character, foiling the rigid bureaucrats who want to claim her property while keeping her tenants on their toes. This play is an original work by Denver playwright John McCallum. Mr. McCallum has written many wonderful music/theater pieces and comedies using contemporary African American life as the context for his scripts.

**For tickets: 413-636-9196 / 413-219-9592 /
413-563-3935**

This play is directed by L'Kuicha Parks. Opening night is May 1. Doors open at 6:30 with a reception and an art exhibit featuring Laura Palmer Edwards. Show time is at 8 pm. Tickets are \$35 singles and \$60 couples.

Ms. Edwards work will be exhibited through out the run. The show will continue May 1-10, 2009, Friday and Sat. 8 PM – Sunday 4 PM. Tickets for the remainder of the shows will be \$25 in advance. Bring a friend and be part of the arts portion of the renaissance of State Street.

www.jelupaproductions.org

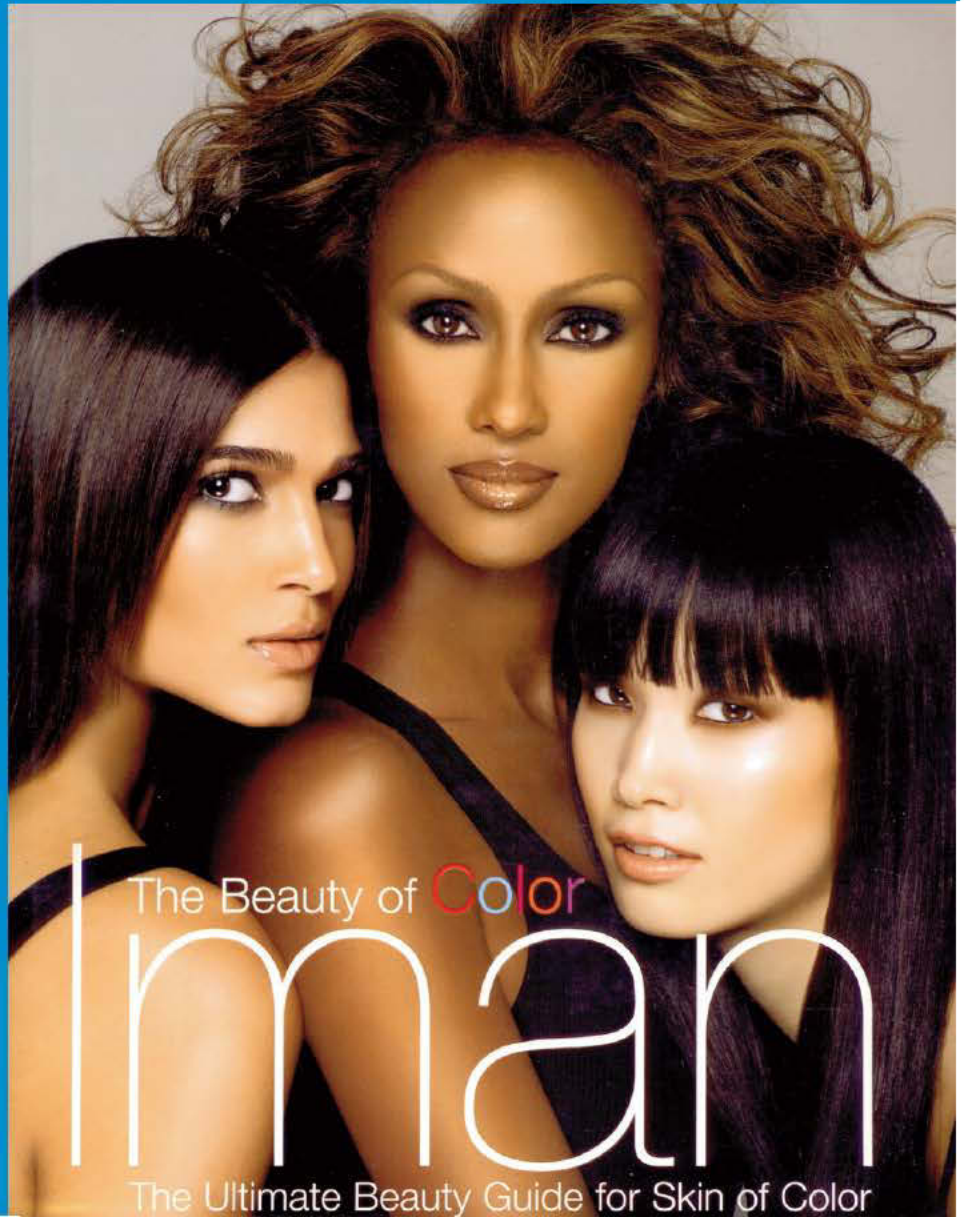
April is Minority Health Month

As we learn about the various campaigns for health such as Minority Health Month (April 2009), Stroke Awareness Month (May 2009), Prostate Cancer Awareness, etc, let's first take the time to acknowledge that we must pledge to take care of ourselves -- more today than ever before. While we want to maintain and improve our health - we must remember that health involves the external and internal. Its time to look and feel healthy - mind, body, soul and spirit -- inside and out.

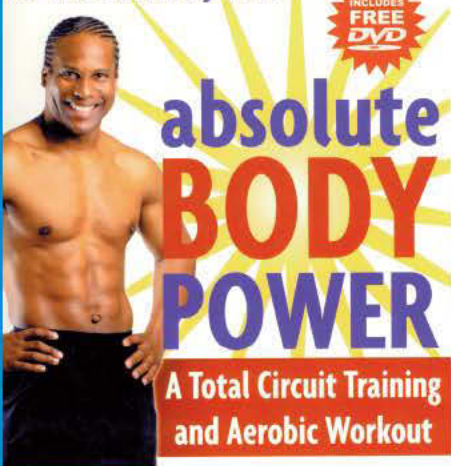
This year, we share an old favorite, the book, "The Beauty of Color," by top supermodel and Iman Cosmetics CEO, IMAN. This book is great for all ages and cultures to understand the skin care basics for all.

Also, check out Alan Harris' "Absolute Body Power: A Total Circuit Training and Aerobic Workout." for the new moves to keep your body in shape.

Together, we can stay healthy and live better lives.



For Your Best Body Ever!



Absolute Body Power

Alan Harris no-nonsense approach to fitness gives you the power and tools to get the body you've always dreamed of. Get ready for Absolute Body Power-and get ready for a new you!

Host of The Absolute Body Power Show on cable TV, Alan Harris is an AFAA-certified trainer and fitness consultant who has worked with corporations such as AT&T and Weight Watchers. Everything you need to succeed is included:

- "Two easy-to-follow workouts on a deluxe 40-minute DVD
- "A motivational interactive fitness journal
- "Detailed descriptions of exercises-the right form for the right results
- "A customized workout plan for all fitness levels
- "A healthy eating plan, tasty recipes, insider tips and much, much more.

Facts & Figures about Prostate Cancer

- The most commonly diagnosed form of cancer in American men, prostate cancer is also among the most treatable.
- In the African-American community, prostate cancer is the leading cause of cancer death (37%) in African American men - double the mortality rate for Caucasian men.
- Although highly treatable, prostate cancer has one of the most complicated set of treatment options. This often-confusing set of options creates a need for coherent, user-friendly prostate cancer information for men-at-risk, newly-diagnosed prostate cancer patients, survivors, family members and health care professionals.
- Nearly 100% of men diagnosed with localized prostate cancer are still alive after five years. (NPCC 2008 Facts & Figures)

Through its annual symposium, the Massachusetts Prostate Cancer Coalition provides attendees access to the top prostate cancer/oncology doctors and health care professionals in the field at no cost to attendees. Please plan to attend, Saturday, May 16, 2009, 8:30am - 2:00pm, Marriott Boston Copley Place. For more information, please call: 617 482-3044 or register on-line: www.masspcc.org.

If you are newly diagnosed, a survivor, or at risk ... don't miss this event!



12TH ANNUAL MASSACHUSETTS PROSTATE CANCER SYMPOSIUM

Saturday, May 16, 2009

8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Marriott Boston Copley Place

FREE AND OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

A once-a-year event — leading prostate cancer specialists provide up-to-date information on the latest in prostate cancer treatment and research — in user-friendly language!



For more information and to register for this FREE SYMPOSIUM, go to www.masspcc.org or call 617-482-3044

Let's talk about cancer.

It's no secret in the health care community that certain minorities are at greater risk for developing cancer.

National Minority Cancer Awareness Week is April 19–25.

Spread the word to your friends, family, and co-workers, and talk with your doctor about getting regular cancer screenings.

It's a conversation that just might save a life.



MASSACHUSETTS

Cherishing life - one step at a time

Gloria May Peeler, a woman of grace and peace, is known to many as Gentle Running Deer, reflecting her Native American heritage. Peeler, a recent stroke survivor, has learned many things in life -- from cherishing her family and God, to celebrating her heritage and community.

Peeler exudes a certain joy in life itself, despite the scare of the stroke. "I didn't realize I had the stroke until I went to the doctor to ask about my headaches," she says.

"Fortunately, the stroke wasn't a serious one, but now I know the warning signs."

Peeler has made successful transitions throughout her life journey, from loving her biological mother (Harriet May - shown in the top photo) to being abused and raped in the care of foster parents, to having a family of her own, marrying, divorcing, remarrying and finally being formally acknowledged and named in the Nipmuc tribe.

Her life has taken many paths, but in the midst of it all, she has been faithful to her church. She has been a member of Springfield's House of Prayer since 1962 and has been church secretary for 40 years. Also, she is



Harriet May



Gloria May Peeler



Gloria May Peeler

dedicated to teaching children about Native Americans as a board member of the native American Inter-Tribal council of Western Massachusetts.

"I found out about my Native roots as a teenager," she says. "Also, I learned that I came from a family of 'free' Blacks in a Western Massachusetts settlement town that hosted many fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad. One of the homes in her family, the Tucker/Todd homesite has been formally recognized.

She is truly a woman who has focused on living life and being thankful that she has

made it through life's transitions.

"I was a nurses assistant for many years and later also worked in social services," says Peeler. "I have worked in restaurants and churches and now I teach about Native history." Peeler, who once won second runner-up in the Miss Massachusetts and proudly affirms her Native heritage at powwows and other tribal events.

Peeler has five children (one deceased), 12 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.



The May Clan From Eldest to Youngest, Left to Right: Mary, George, Bill, Ethelyn, Lloyd, Walter, Herbie, Gloria, Dolores, Ronnie, Norman



**POWER TO
END STROKESM**

You are the Power

You Have the Power...To End Stroke

Be real. Be strong. Be proud.

The power is in your hands. The power is in your hands to prevent and overcome stroke. Power To End Stroke is an education and awareness campaign that embraces and celebrates the culture, energy, and lifestyles of communities of color in Boston. It unites

African Americans to help make an impact on the high incidence of stroke within the community.

I pledge...To not just survive - but thrive. I will learn how to live stronger and longer - for me, my family, and my community.

I will join the movement to prevent and overcome stroke.

I will call 9-1-1 immediately if I or someone I know experience these signs of stroke:

- o Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- o Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- o Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- o Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- o Sudden severe headache with no known cause

Choose to move for your health. Sign on to the Power to End Stroke pledge by visiting www.heart.org/greater-bostonchi and enter to win an iPod today!

Call 1-888-4-STROKE
for more information.



**POWER TO
END STROKESM**
You are the Power



American Heart
Association

American Stroke
Association
Learn and Live.

The Power of "Obama Love": the message that Black marriage matters

Dr Lynda Morris Parham

As the world watches President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama take center stage, their very presence debunks many of the negative images of Black Americans. One of the most powerful messages that emanates from their lives is that Blacks can achieve a high-quality and committed marriage. While Obama's presidency reflects the significant gains made by individuals over the past 40 years, we must also note Blacks have experienced a downward trend of two-parent households from 70% in 1968 to 48% in 2002.

For many Blacks, marriage has not been a part of their family experience. Consequently, they have not received the benefits that marriage brings to men, women, and children. This marriage gap is a major health disparity that hinders the health and quality of life for many. According to a study published by the Institute for American Values, married African Americans are typically wealthier, happier, and choose healthier behaviors than their unmarried peers. Black children who

come from homes with married parents have less delinquency, higher self-esteem, better educational outcomes, and delay sexual activity.

Marriage is a "community" health issue because it is not simply an agreement between two adults. Marriage is a foundation that creates the sustainable relational dynamics for the couple, their children, the extended family and the larger community. When two people decide to marry, they are making a public declaration of their relationship. Family, friends and their larger communities will recognize their marital bond. The marital commitment is also publically validated by social systems that have relevance to the couple, such as religious, cultural and legal traditions.

The private love between the two has significance to others in that they publically agree to practice commitment, honesty, respect, self-sacrifice and fidelity. Given the public declaration of these attributes, the marriage bond has more significance than two people who choose to



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simply co-habitate. When there is co-habitation and not marriage, the health benefits and shared purpose that are accorded to marriage do not exist.

Marriage stabilizes individuals, families and communities. Marriage builds bonds between individuals, within and between families. Even when the marital bond is severed there can be lasting family relationships that are sustained and provide security. The marriage may fail; but the sense of family can be enduring because it has usually included more than the two individuals who joined in marriage.

Due to economic and social

realities for Black marriages, many Black families have lived out non-traditional ways of partnering and creative extended family arrangements. Despite the fewer number of marriages today, historically there have been Black couples who have flexible parental/gender roles and shared partnering with regards to finances and family decisions. As we move to support an increase in the numbers of Black marriages, let us remember the ways that marriage was strong and healthy in our communities.

The lessons of unconditional commitment, working together, taking the bitter with the sweet and life long companionship are learned in marriage. These same lessons are the building blocks of good character and strong relationships; they make each of us better friends, family members, employees and citizens. If the marriages around us deteriorate where will we and our children learn these valuable life lessons that improve our individual and collective social, economic and psychological well-being.



**Husband and wife team
Derryl and Shelia Gibbs Sr.,
owners of Optical Expressions in
Springfield, MA (see ad on page 17)**

Shelia, a licensed optician for over 12 years, said she wanted to have her own business one day -- that was her dream. Last Summer, she lost her job because her boss retired and sold his practice. Knowing that The Lord has always guided her family she remembered her husband's famous phrase, "We can only go forward" and together they proceeded to start their own business. Shelia says, "My husband, is so wonderful -- he's behind me 200% and he's been such a great help to get everything off and running."

Black Nurses Day in Western Massachusetts

The Western Massachusetts Black Nurses Association recently held their annual brunch event, "Nursing, Education and Leadership: Creating a Path Towards a Brighter Future."

The Annual Black Nurses Day brunch is a celebration of outstanding community service and recognition of significant contributions to the field of nursing. This year, the organization honored the legacy and leadership of Mrs. Bettye Davis, RN of Springfield, MA. During the recognition event, Jean E. Swinney RN. PhD, Interim Dean, School of Nursing, University of Massachusetts,

was the keynote speaker. Dr. Jean Swinney has been dedicated to providing quality health care to vulnerable populations through her public health practice. She has worked in the U.S. and Africa. Dr. Swinney, committed to decreasing and ultimately eliminating health disparities, is currently working on a research project, "Embracing the Challenge: Increasing Workforce Diversity in Nursing."

About Bettye Davis

Bettye Davis enrolled in the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing in 1954 where she was only one of two Black females



Dr. Jean Swinney

in the class. Later, she became the first Black nurse for Manpower Development Training Skills Center. Also, Bettye became the first African woman to hold the position of Occupational Health Nurse at Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company. Davis, now retired, has remained busy as a part-time staff nurse as



Bettye Davis, RN

well as a camp nurse for the Urban League.

The officers of the Black Nurses Associations organization are Almaneta Lee, President, Andra Cole, Vice President, Carol Caulton, Treasurer, and Estelle Early, Recording Secretary.



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by Mable Lene Sharif

Parent to Parent Empowering parents to help prevent their children from drugs or substance misuse.

Parents must learn about the various drugs available today, their affects on children and some of the consequences of the misuse of said drugs. Drugs or substance use in this column includes illegal and legal (tobacco, alcohol and some home cleaning products) substances that can become addictive. By the time most children enter preschool they would have seen adults smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol, possibly their own parents, friends or an adult on television. So why wouldn't children believe that it is not okay to do the same?

Parents must lead by example. Usually the first drugs children are exposed to are tobacco and alcohol. Both are legal and often lead children to begin using illegal drugs.

Talk to your children about the effects of drugs on children and some of the consequences such as losing friends, family, and life threaten health problems. Parents do and can make a difference in the choices children might make. It has been said time after time that parents are their children first teachers.



The MacDuffie School presents "My Fair Lady"



The MacDuffie School recently presented "My Fair Lady," the musical based on George Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion." The musical's cast and crew included over 50 boys and girls in grades 6-12, from Springfield and surrounding communities, as well as international students from countries including China, Korea, Germany and Ethiopia. Ta'Nika Slater of Springfield played Eliza Doolittle and Jimmy Grezlak of Southwick played Professor Henry Higgins. Congrats to the cast for a great performance.

If that statement is true, and I believe it to be, parents have a head start in influencing their children behavior. Parents must instill in their children at an early age what they would like for their children to become as an adult.

So, build a good relationship with your child and get to know your child's friends and their parents. If you are working,

and many parents do and must work, provide some alternatives activities for your child in a supervised organized program. Usually organized programs incorporate children developmental, self-esteem, self-confidence and other skills. Ask your child what she or he enjoys doing and try to match them where they will be happy. After all some children might use

drugs because they have nothing better to do or to cover up their pain. Parents must do a better job of getting to know their children in order to properly equip them to effectively face and fight the warfare in their every day life and come out WINNER!

Mable Lene Sharif

"BEAT STREET" DANCE RECITAL

Center Stage Dance and
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"Beat Street" Dance Recital

Date: May 31, 2009

(3:30 pm, doors open, 4 pm show starts)

Location: Rebecca Johnson School, Springfield

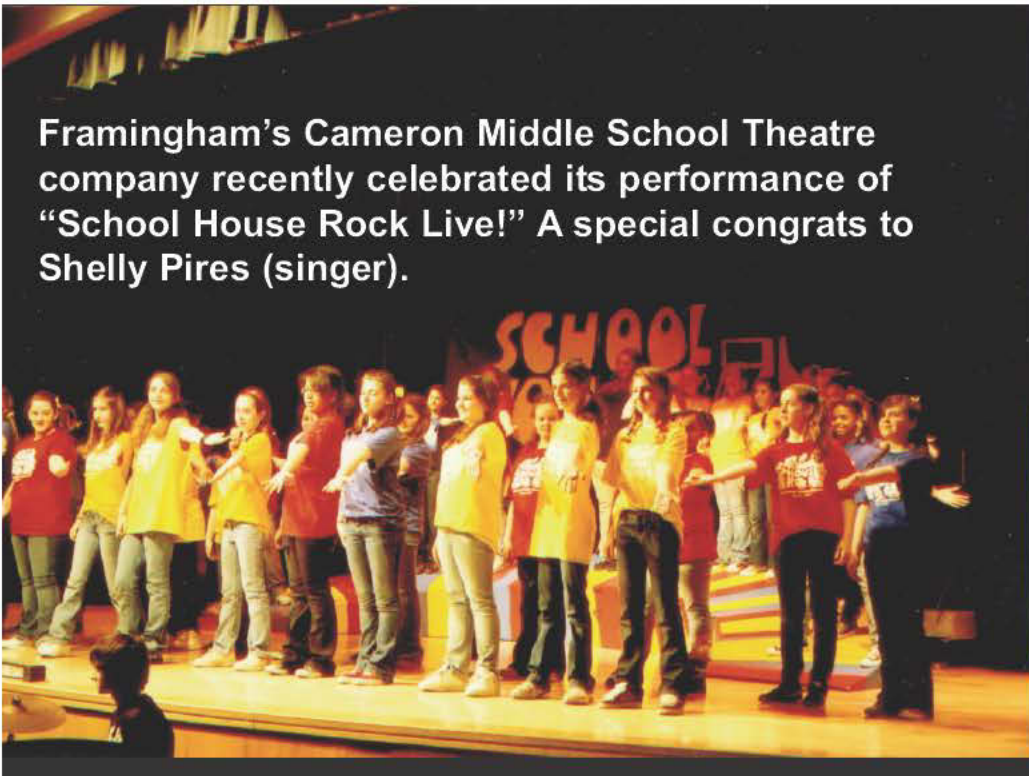
For tickets, call

(413) 237-8120 or (413) 543-1334



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Framingham's Cameron Middle School Theatre company recently celebrated its performance of "School House Rock Live!" A special congrats to Shelly Pires (singer).



Business

Western New England College Law and Business Center for Advancing Entrepreneurship recently held its annual "How To" Entrepreneurship Institute" with keynote speaker Andrew Morrison, founder of Small Business Camp - an entrepreneurial training, coaching and marketing services firm.

Aimee Griffin Munnings, director of the Center encouraged attendees to learn from Morrison's success and take full advantage of learning opportunities during the conference.

Morrison inspired attendees to think about what businesses they are 'called' to build' and to better package their brilliance.

He said, "If you are serious about your business, you will take it to a whole new level in the next 90 days by believing that "If you ask, you shall receive." He advised, "Identify what's next for you and acknowledge any factors that are holding you back from your goals."

Morrison also encouraged attendees to develop a strong identity for their business. He said, "Think about who you are and who you need to be."

Speaking from experience, Morrison once built a multi-million dollar company by providing innovative direct marketing services to Fortune 500 companies. He was featured in the Wall Street Journal, Entrepreneur Magazine, Crain's Magazine 40 under 40 and Advertising Age. He also appeared as a "Young Millionaire" on the Oprah Winfrey show.

Morrison is the recipient of the prestigious Young Direct Marketer of the Year award and serves as a Deacon at the Abyssinian Baptist Church located in the village of Harlem.



Shown above (left to right) is Aimee Griffin Munnings and Andrew Morrison.

Shown at left is: Andrew Morrison during a role play exercise.

Best Books 2009



Ted Gee

Are you the leader you could be, should be, or ought to be? Are you knowledgeable of the leadership tools that you must have to reach the next level of success?

If not, author Ted Gee's bestselling book "Hope Is Not A Strategy: Simple Solutions for Doing Business in the 21st Century", is a good starting point for those of you in corporate America or entrepreneurs leading small businesses.

Ted Gee's powerful, 'how to' book is not more of the same. It is about changing the way you think and the outcomes you can expect in your business venture or corporate role. The author takes President Obama's vision of hope to the

next level of execution. According to Gee, "The major responsibility of an effective leader is to transform hope or vision into reality and profits."

President Obama has set an aggressive agenda of change and hope is just the foundation. Gee says that the best stimulus package for corporate leaders and business owners is getting the right process tools to drive increased business, sustainable profits, save jobs and inspire growth.

"We must clarify what business owners and corporate leaders are responsible for and identify new methods for solving the complex problems they face," he notes. "As many companies continue to fail, need bailouts and layoff employees, it is clear that a new recipe for solving

problems and creating solutions is needed right now."

In the book, Gee defines the roles and responsibilities of leaders at all levels as a process and explains how to develop a vision with a sustainable strategy as opposed to just adjusting financials to appease boards, investors, banks and/or Wall Street. He also explains how incorporating the leadership continuum as a process will enable succession planning and various programs such as diversity, lean and six sigma and others will become part of the DNA and culture of the company.

sizes, "the leaders in all facets of business are responsible for many of the failures in the economy -- the dot com bust, housing market collapse, decline of stock market and rising oil prices."

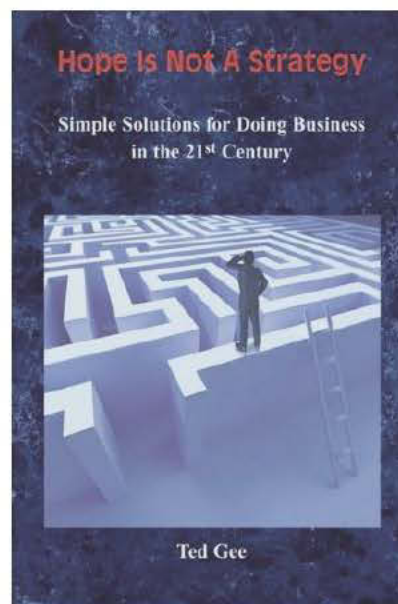
Gee, who has followed his own rules, is a proven leader, with global experience in various business environments. He has held positions at the direct operational and strategic levels of leadership - and found success in roles at Fortune 500 companies where change, start-ups and growth opportunities were in great demand. Also, he served as an officer in the

United States Army and has worked his way up the corporate ladder from front line supervisor to executive level positions of Chief Operating Officer for a private equity group and President within a fortune 500 industry pacesetter. His focus today is

have fallen short of their goals or failed to take advantage of their company's possibility and prospects.

Ted Gee, president of Florida based Success Based Intervention (SBI) a global consulting company that focuses on assisting small to mid cap companies to be as successful as they can be uses the practical methods from his book to ensure their long term success. His team comprised of some dynamic leaders from various industries that specialize in utilizing the leadership continuum as a process, along with some experts in process innovation with certifications in lean and six sigma methodologies form the unique team that provide clients with success based solutions.

Another burning platform that SBI and Gee's book are addressing is the many colleges and universities whose graduates will not find a job in corporate America. With the economic conditions forcing many layoffs in companies the outlook for college graduates getting jobs that will enable them to pursue dreams in corporations is getting bleak. Many of the students will be forced to pursue other methods of hope in starting their new careers. With many of these universities and colleges focused on teaching management philosophy and theory



Ted Gee

"Many business leaders today are using the excuse of a poor economy to support their failures," says Gee, who notes that the root cause of many of the failures reside in the driver's seat -- leadership.

"From Wall Street to Main Street," he empha-

to help others strategize for success and avoid failure -- whether in a business or working in a corporation. "We are playing a new game in a new time and without solutions, failure is eminent," says Gee, who notes that the book offers help to those who may

Gee's book and his team of experts provides some much needed leadership tools and assimilation methods to the students that will be a competitive advantage for job seekers and starting a small business in this tough market.

"It's about adding value to companies on day one, and having the necessary tools to start a business more than a burning passion that will be the foundation for success" adds Gee. As many of the colleges and universities will have to align with the needs of companies to continue being feeders of talent, shrinking endowments and rethinking the priorities within their strategies, many of the historically black colleges and universities will be hit hardest.

As we learn from President Obama's example, your dreams of increased profit and hopes of a rousing success are totally attainable and achievable, but the question is: Are you willing to change with the times and get the intellectual capital you need to run a better business or multi-billion dollar corporate enterprise --- including investing money into business plans, human resources, marketing, financial planning, etc? If not, then Gee's methods will help you refocus on business stability and growth as opposed to failure due to poor execution of strategies, lack of accountability, misguided leadership, ineffective processes, and a shortage of funding.

Facing failure

Many researchers estimate that nine of ten new businesses fail in their first year, usually because of the lack of training. "I tell corporate professionals and business owners what many of their bosses and mentors have not -- the practical steps and skills for getting the job done," says Gee, who encour-

ages people to use his new book to get their businesses and careers on track.

Gee says, "It's time to get the ROI you deserve, and especially for the marketplace's high potentials, including the following:

--Diverse professionals and business leaders -

With many Black businesses not receiving the market support they need, Black owned business still are the fastest growing segment of the small business marketplace and Hispanic business grew at three times the national average. These businesses should not lose the ground they've gained.

--Women-owned professionals and business leaders:

Although glass ceilings still need to be shattered, the rate of women-owned firms continues to grow at twice the rate of all U.S. firms. It's time to break the glass ceilings.

--Immigrant business owners-

Despite language and cultural barriers, immigrant businesses generate one quarter of all business income in California, and this group is making similar strides across the U.S. Let's cross-over and create even more suc-

cess.

--Family-owned business:

The SBA estimates that small business failure for family owned businesses is two out of three. If second and third generations make smart decisions, the legacy will continue. Let's straighten it out now before the next generation puts it on an ipod.

If you are part of any of these business related groups, or others, the book can help you bridge the barriers you now face. "Let's re-tool to achieve more success than ever before," says Gee. "We need to seek

long term solutions instead of silver bullet scenarios. We need a process that drives a strategy, not a financial plan with holes. We need to engage team members based on competencies and not by preference. Lastly, we need to simply lead with excellence."

To contact SBI, get a copy of this book, or to interview this author, call Jay Mattier at jay@jmattier.com or call (704) 919-0507. The book is available at www.strategicsolutionsbysbi.com, Amazon books, Barnes and Nobles and other fine book stores near you.

Best Books 2009

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For more information call the Law and Business for Advancing Entrepreneurship at **413-796-2030** or email amannings@law.wnec.edu

Walk for Power

On Saturday, March 21, Charles Clemons began his Walk For Power with a send-off that included appearances by Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Minister Don Muhammad, City Councilors Charles Yancey and Sam Yoon and close to 200 friends, family members and well-wishers. He covered the entire state of Massachusetts in less than a week. When he reached Pompeii, New York, a small town outside of Albany, Clemons had to abruptly end the Walk because his driver was unable to continue the journey. Because of safety concerns and not having a driver, Clemons returned to Boston after walking 227 miles. However, the General Manager of TOUCH 106.1 FM decided to redirect his steps and take his fight to Washington, D.C. On Saturday, April 4, he began walking to Washington DC. to achieve his goal of bringing attention to the plight of low power FM stations. He reached Washington on April 17 and proceeded to advocate for community radio stations and joined other representatives from national low power FM radio stations and Washington D.C. legislators.

Congratulations Charles
Each step truly
makes a difference.



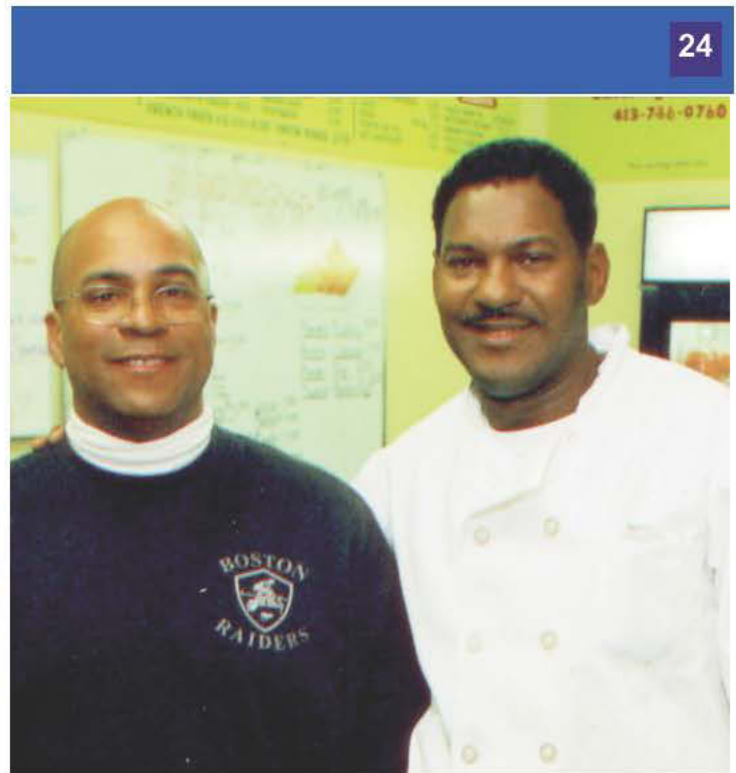
Multicultural Symposium Series, a success



Author and speaker Carole Copeland Thomas recently held the Multicultural Symposium Series to promote the ongoing dialogue and exchange of relevant date, resources and ideas all related to multiculturalism.

She says, "Our theme says it all, "global Horizons: Collaboration, Cooperation and Connections." Indeed, this event shared valuable information critical to corporate, business and community success.

If you would like to learn more about the presentations or to order audiotapes, call (508) 947-5755.



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Daryl Alston welcomed Charles Clemons, on his Walk for Power, to Springfield. Daryl, along with his wife Kim, owns Daryl's Place, a family-owned and operated restaurant in the heart of Springfield's Mason Square area. The restaurant signature dishes include "back in the day" shabazz chicken wings, scrumptious fried chicken and the world famous bean pie. Daryl, who has been in the restaurant business for over 25 years, has worked as a line cook, kitchen supervisor, expeditor, waiter and manager at well-known restaurant chains across the state. Daryl's Place also offers an array of simple homemade side dishes from macaroni and cheese, and greens with smoked turkey to delicious desserts such as peach cobbler and sweet potato pie. For more information, please call (413) 746-0760. The restaurant is located at 892 State St. in Springfield, MA.

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Remembering James Baldwin

Suffolk University's Quentin Miller of the English Department recently hosted the conference, "James Baldwin: In His Time / In Our Time," which attracted attendees from across the country and Europe.

Miller says, "Organizing the 2009 James Baldwin conference was a very rewarding experience. As someone who has dedicated much of his professional life to writing about and teaching the works of Baldwin, it's encouraging to see that other scholars are as passionately dedicated to his work as I am. The general mood of the conference was one of serious intellectual engagement as well as deep respect



Shown (left to right) are Quentin Miller, Carole Weinstein (Baldwin family member) and Calvin Levels.

both for Baldwin and for other scholars who continue to scrutinize his writings carefully.

"Literary critics have described Baldwin as the most successful African American writer of his time, and even of all time. His prominence or fame are of less importance, though, than the substantial body of complex writing he left behind for readers, students, and scholars to interpret. Literary critics are clearly engaged with Baldwin's works more deeply than ever before, and it was fortunate that Suffolk was the site of a key moment in this engagement.

"The students who attended will undoubtedly remember how the conference expanded their understanding of an author they encountered in the classroom, and the scholars who attended will look back on this March in Boston as a watershed moment in a rich, ongoing conversation about this author's significance. Baldwin once wrote, 'All art is a kind of confession,' and later added, 'Artists are here to disturb the peace.' Over two decades after his death, we're still listening, and paying profound attention to



Calvin Levels is shown in James Baldwin - "Down From the Mountain Top"

his lifelong confession, grateful for his willingness to disturb the peace as he did."

During the conference, attendees enjoyed an extremely profound performance of "James Baldwin - Down From The Mountaintop," a one-man play written and performed by Tony Award nominee, Calvin Levels. The play depicts the rich and impassioned life of the esteemed novelist, playwright, essayist and civil

rights activist James Baldwin. It traces the fervent life of this American writer recognized for his novels on personal identity, along with his, plays and essays on human rights.

Levels was incredibly engaging and the portrayal of Baldwin was truly authentic. This was a great tribute to James Baldwin.

'Harlem Renaissance' revisited with gospel



The 11th Annual Harlem Renaissance Revisited with a Gospel Flavor Play will be performed from May 7-9, at the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School at 260 Columbia Road in Dorchester, MA. The show time is 7:15 pm each night.

The play brings to life noted figures from the Harlem Renaissance era including Paul Robeson, Madame C.J. Walker, Ethel Waters, Josephine Baker & Langston Hughes. It discusses some of the issues they faced in pursuit of their careers notably racism and how they overcame it.

The multi-generational cast, are members of the Oscar Micheaux Family Theater Program based at the Blackstone Community Center in Boston's South End. The

program boasts family and community members learning and performing together and is sponsored by the Tri-Ad Veterans League, Inc.

An added feature to this year's program is an essay component for student audience members. Students who attend the performance can submit an essay of no more than 300 words on what they learned from the play. Essay participants will receive a certificate and some will be placed on our website.

The founder of the Oscar Micheaux Family Theater Program is playwright, author and community activist Haywood Fennell Sr. For more information, call, 617-238-2460. Tickets to the show are \$15 for Adults and \$10 for children. Group rates are available.

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