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To: Mayor Mark Kruzan and Common Council of the City of Bloomington

From: Greg Tourner, Chair, Commission on the Status of Black Males

Re: 2012 Report from the Commission on the Status of Black Males

Date: March 1, 2013

Since being created to address the challenges faced by African-American males in the areas of health, employment, criminal justice, and education, the Commission on the Status of Black Males has worked to promote local public and private remedies to some of the challenges confronting Black males. The group has organized and convened community meetings to discuss the status of Black males, and it has networked with other groups in the community and the state. Commission members at the end of 2012 included Commission Chair Greg Tourner (appointed by the Common Council), Vice Chair Beverly Smith (Common Council), Secretary Cedric Harris (Mayor), immediate past Chair David Hummons (appointed by the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration Commission), Eric Love (Mayor), and new members Ross Stuckey (Human Rights Commission), and Cornelius Wright (Mayor). Staff support is provided by Special Projects Coordinator Craig Brenner, with the assistance of Indiana University SPEA Fellow Rebecca Ciciretti.

In January of 2012, Mayor Kruzan called for nominations for the Outstanding Black Male Leaders of Tomorrow Awards. The Commission broke the awards into two categories – high school aged males, and adults no older than 30. The Commission selected Myles Adams as the winner in the high school category, and Aaron Barnes in the adult category. The awards were presented at the Black History Month Gala on February 25, 2012.

January also saw the commission co-sponsoring the first of two Barbershop Health Screening events. Working with the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Nu Alpha Alpha Chapter, the City's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission, Community and Family Resources Department Community Health Programs and Outreach, and health professionals from Centerstone, Indiana University Health, and Monroe Hospital, health screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, and HIV took place on Saturday, January 21, 2012 at three local barbershops – Angela's Ebony Designs, College Town Cutters, and Hoosier Barbershop.

In addition to the above activities, at the January meeting commissioners were addressed by a citizen with concerns about the local criminal justice system. Specifically, the citizen spoke

2012 Report from the Commission on the Status of Black Males, Page 2

with the commission about whether the local jail is reformatory in nature, as called for in the Indiana Constitution, or punitive, and how this difference impacts African American men both in jail and when they return to society following incarceration. Additional concerns expressed by others include difficulties sometimes experienced by people in receiving prescribed psychiatric medicines while incarcerated in Monroe County Jail. The commission decided to try to schedule a visit and tour of the jail.

The January meeting also provided an opportunity for the commissioners to meet Tom Saccone, the new director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Central Indiana, who confirmed his organization's commitment to working with the commission in identifying, training, and placing more African American mentors. Finally, IU Visiting Professor Vernon Archer proposed creating a summer "Science Experience for Young Students," which would consist of a gardening program. The group endorsed the idea and encouraged Dr. Archer to continue to attend meetings and present a formal proposal.

In February, the commission began planning another Barbershop Health Screening event, this time in collaboration with the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males, which encouraged each local commission to work toward similar screenings statewide in late April. Commissioners and Nancy Woolery of CFRD Health Programs and Outreach participated in frequent conference calls with others from around the state. Commissioners also partnered with Big Brothers on another event, a Reality Fair, on Feb. 27, 2012, at First United Church. At the event, Little Brothers participated in simulations so they could learn about salaries, family status, budgeting, etc.

The commission participated in the statewide Barbershop Health Screening event, April 28, 2012, with screenings at Razor's Image provided by health professionals organized by Nancy Woolery. The commission is evaluating participation in the next statewide event, scheduled for April 13, 2013, and members began participating in regular, statewide conference calls that will address that event. Among issues to be decided are whether to expand the health screenings to include Hispanic members of the community, and whether to continue at barbershops or move to other locations where traffic might increase participation.

In May, five children began the Summer Science gardening program by planting seeds, under the direction of Dr. Archer. The seedlings and other plants were planted at the Willie Streeter Community Garden, where Dr. Archer secured two plots for use by the children in growing and harvesting. The program continued over the summer, providing hands-on experience for the children who participated. The commission appreciates the efforts of the creator of the program, Dr. Vernon Archer.

The tour of the Monroe County Jail took place on July 11, 2012, led by the jail commander. As a result, the commission discussed inviting several members of the community to a future meeting at which the 2003 Racial Justice Task Force will be discussed, with a view toward exploring the need for an update.

Through the efforts of SPEA Fellow Rebecca Ciciretti, the commission's Facebook page appeared in September, 2012, providing another means of communicating with the public about the activities of the commission.

2012 Report from the Commission on the Status of Black Males, Page 3

The commission held another “Call Out” for potential mentors on November 28, 2012, at the Monroe County Historical Society. The event was not well attended, and the commission is discussing other ways to identify more African American mentors to work with Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Central Indiana.

The year concluded with a proposal from Omega Psi Phi Fraternity that the Commission again partner with them and with the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration Commission on health screenings at several barbershops on Saturday, January 26, 2013.

For more information about the Commission on the Status of Black Males, please refer to www.bloomington.in.gov/csbn

The following appeared in the Bloomington *Herald-Times* during 2012.

Fraternity hosting health fair Saturday, Jan. 21, 2012

The Nu Alpha Alpha Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity will host a Barbershop Health Fair from 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 21, at three barbershops in Bloomington. The event includes free blood pressure and blood glucose screenings, healthful snacks and wellness information.

The barbershops are Angela’s Ebony Designs, 1328 N. Woodburn Ave., College Town Cutters Barber Shop, 300 E. Third St., and Hoosier Barber Shop, 2534 E. 10th St.

The health fair is sponsored by the City of Bloomington Commission on the Status of Black Males, City of Bloomington Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration Commission and Laffoon Design and Marketing.

Nominations sought for black leadership awards, January 27, 2012

Residents can submit nominations for Bloomington’s Commission on the Status of Black Males’ annual award.

The Outstanding Black Male Leaders of Tomorrow Award recognizes local contributions by African-American youth and seeks to encourage future leaders. The award will be given to two young African-American men: one who is high-school age and one who is younger than 30.

Nomination forms are available at City Hall, 401 N. Morton St., Suite 260 or online at <http://bloomington.in.gov/csbn>.

Nominees must have lived in Monroe County for at least one year and be involved in making meaningful contributions to the Bloomington community. Nominations are due Feb. 7.

For more information, contact Craig Brenner at 349-3471 or brennerc@bloomington.in.gov.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH PROFILE

Greg and Mary Turner volunteer with area youth to help them start off right - In giving back to community, couple is involved with many organizations

By Kasey Husk, Feb. 18, 2012



Greg and Mary Turner. Greg is Chair of the Commission on the Status of Black Males.

Photo by David Snodgrass | Herald-Times

Mentoring children and young adults is a shared passion for Bloomington couple Greg and Mary Turner.

Since moving to Bloomington 11 years ago, the Turners have become role models through their positions as youth sports coach and Indiana University recruiter and mentor. The Turners — Purdue graduates who have been married 18 years and have three children ages 14 to 21 — say it’s a role they find deeply rewarding.

MORE: [Read more profiles on community members](#)

“One thing we both have in common is we love to mentor youth, and provide them avenues ... so they can overcome obstacles rather than having bumps along the road,” said Mary, who works in admissions at IU.

Greg has long coached youth football and boys’ and girls’ Amateur Athletic Union basketball, and now is the president of the Monroe County Youth Football Association. He is also the chairman of the Bloomington Commission on the Status of Black Males, and an advocate for the Volunteers in Medicine program.

“I volunteer because when I was a kid growing up, I was always a part of something, whether it was sports or a club, and I realized that other people had to volunteer to give back to the community,” Greg said. “I can remember one mentor from Indianapolis always said, ‘Hey, I give back to the community because I want to make you guys better.’ And so, when I got to the age where I was able to do it, that was one of the reasons why I jumped into it.”

2012 Report from the Commission on the Status of Black Males, Page 5

Mary, meanwhile, is the adviser for Multicultural Outreach Recruitment Educators, a student organization that works to promote diversity by recruiting minority students. Having such diversity, she said, is important because “students will have to work side-by-side with people who are different from themselves, and we want to prepare them for the real world.”

“And in the classroom, different students bring different backgrounds, and those different backgrounds help create a diverse environment for learning, so it makes the classroom more exciting,” she added.

Mary is also a member of Bloomington’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission and previously helped revive Bloomington High School South’s Black Culture Club.

“My mission has always been that any student I’ve interacted with on campus, just to be a resource for them if they need me,” Mary said. “Because I was a first-generation college student, and I didn’t know how to navigate the collegiate system. And as large as Purdue and IU are, I just don’t want any kid to be lost.”

Their volunteer activities, not to mention their three children, keep the pair plenty busy, but Greg says the couple generally tries to find time to pitch in whenever they are asked to do so, regardless of their tight schedules.

“If you have a chance to make an impact, why not do it?” Greg said.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Gala honors living legends, young leaders

By Abby Tonsing, Feb. 26, 2012

The City of Bloomington’s annual Black History Month Gala honored those named living legends and young community leaders over dinner, drinks and live music Saturday evening at the Hilton Garden Inn.

Dr. Gladys DeVane, a founder of Options for Better Living, local thespian and storyteller, was named this year’s Living Legend, which honors those who have helped open doors and pave the way for others. While DeVane said she doesn’t think of herself as a living legend, she hopes she has helped open doors — “especially for those who can’t speak for themselves.”

DeVane and her husband, Gene, helped found Options for Better Living in the 1980s. She recalled the organization’s first meeting with five families in her living room. Options, now called LifeDesigns, provides opportunities for people with developmental disabilities.

“I really consider myself the driving force behind that,” she said of forming Options.

There’s always that part of her that “tries to fix a little part of the world.” And when things can’t be fixed, she tries to make the best of it. DeVane has also served on the board of directors for Stone Belt and volunteers for the Shalom Community Center.

2012 Report from the Commission on the Status of Black Males, Page 6

After retiring from Indiana University's department of speech and hearing sciences and the Kelley School of Business in 2003, DeVane became active in local community theater. She's been a storyteller since the age of 10.

DeVane is a member of the Bloomington Playwrights Project board of directors and is a member of the National Black Storytellers Association, the Bloomington Storytellers Guild and the National Society of Arts and Letters.

She and her husband have been residents of Bloomington for almost 50 years, and have three sons.

During a March Women's History Month lunch, she'll receive a Lifetime Contribution Award from the Woman of the Year Subcommittee of the City of Bloomington's Commission on the Status of Women.

Leaders of tomorrow

This year, the city recognized two young men as Outstanding Black Male Leaders of Tomorrow, deciding to expand the award into two categories — one to recognize a man younger than 18 and another in the 19 to 30 age range.

Bloomington High School North junior Myles S. Adams was named an Outstanding Black Male Leader of Tomorrow.

Adams, 17, moved to Bloomington from Michigan City in 2007 to live with his uncle and aunt, Shawn and Krisi Adams, after his mother died from a rare eye disease. "I just want to do good for her," he said. "I know that she's looking down, smiling on me."

A 21st Century Scholar, Adams hopes to study optometry or start a career in the biomedical field so he can continue to help people.

Saturday night, Adams said he was astounded to look back and see all that he's accomplished in Bloomington in the past five years.

He's been inducted into the National Honor Society, serves on North's student council, plays multiple sports and is active in volunteer work, from the Community Kitchen to Habitat for Humanity.

Indiana University senior Aaron J. Barnes was also named an Outstanding Black Male Leader of Tomorrow. The 22-year-old business marketing major from Kokomo plans on getting his doctorate in consumer behavior. He's waiting to hear if he's been accepted to Duke, New York University or Maryland, among others.

He serves as president of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, which chose him for the Bloomington Unsung Hero award in 2011 and the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. award this year.

2012 Report from the Commission on the Status of Black Males, Page 7

Barnes has served as a founder of the Men of Color Institute, has served on the IU President's Board of Acons, and received the Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis award, given to a senior who has proven academic excellence, leadership in student activities and a distinguished record of service as a good university citizen.



Adams

Barnes

"It just goes to show that what you do is being seen," he said, calling Saturday night's new honor humbling.

Barnes' parents, Fred and Cathy Barnes, and grandmother, Roberta Tompkins, joined him at the gala from Kokomo. So did his aunt from California, Marie Cumbee.

Free health screenings offered to black men at local barbershop

By Kasey Husk, April 27, 2012

A statewide effort to address health issues common among black men is coming to a Bloomington barbershop Saturday.

The city and local organizations are teaming up to offer free health screenings from 9 a.m. to noon at Razor's Image Barbershop, 223 Pete Ellis Drive. Bloomington will be one of nine communities offering free health screenings at local barbershops Saturday as part of the Indiana Black Barbershop Health Initiative, which intended to help black men catch common health problems before they can cause more serious issues.

The screening will include blood pressure monitoring, tests for cholesterol, diabetes and HIV and body mass index and nutrition counseling, said Nancy Woolery, health projects manager for the city's Community and Family Resources department, which is organizing the health fair. Anyone who wishes to have their cholesterol monitored must fast for 12 hours before the test, and results from the 10- to 15-minute screening will be available immediately.

2012 Report from the Commission on the Status of Black Males, Page 8

“Minorities and particularly African-Americans, and in particular black males, are at risk because they are not getting the same type of health care as the general public,” said David Hummons, a member and past president of the Commission on the Status of Black Males, a group involved with the health fair. “The disparities ... are very significant. One of the problems with disparities and underrepresented groups is that if things aren’t taken care of early — and screenings are done early — then problems are exacerbated.”

Barbershops were chosen as the venue for the health fairs because they have historically been “a place of camaraderie” where black men gather to discuss anything from their jobs and politics to their day-to-day lives, Hummons said.

“In that regard, we’re taking our health fair to a site where we’ve already got an audience,” Woolery said. “We’re going to them.”

Woolery also noted that although the health fair is aimed at black men, the volunteer nurses conducting the screenings will test anyone who comes to the barbershop.

Saturday’s health fair is not the first to be offered in Bloomington, however. The Nu Alpha Alpha chapter of Omega Psi Phi, which is also partnering with the city on Saturday’s health fair, offered health screenings at three local barbershops on Jan. 21, said Craig Brenner, special projects manager for the community and family resources department. The city also offered health screenings at a Soul Food Festival two years ago.

Brenner said he hopes to have about 100 people turn out for the screenings on Saturday.

The other organizations collaborating on the health fair are Monroe Hospital and IU Health Bloomington Hospital — both of which are providing volunteer nurses — and Centerstone, a mental health service organization.

“We have really good cooperation by local health providers in Bloomington” Brenner said. “They realize that the way to treat people is to do preventive stuff and not just wait until everybody is sick.”

Professor launches gardening program for local children

By Victoria Ison, June 1, 2012

After finishing his first year at Indiana University as a senior lecturer of biology, biochemist Vernon Archer said he wanted to do something to help children in the community.

“I don’t know if you even have an inner city here,” said Archer, who is originally from Mississippi and taught at universities in Florida, New Jersey and Illinois. “But we have got to do something, especially for African-American kids, about the void that exists for them in the scientific community.”

2012 Report from the Commission on the Status of Black Males, Page 9

With the help of Craig Brenner, the community and projects coordinator for the city of Bloomington, Archer started the Children's Gardening Program. Through the program, a handful of elementary-age children meet every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Winslow Woods Park to learn from Archer about gardening and how plants grow.

"Show me a kid that wouldn't get interested in seeing how plants grow from just these little tubers, and I'll show you a man jump over the moon," said Archer, who said his inspiration for the program came from seeing his 7-year-old grandson take up gardening and love it.

The children nurture a number of edibles, including tomatoes, peppers and okra. They've even planted pumpkins they plan to harvest near Halloween, after the weekly gardening ends the last week of August.

Nancy Woolery, health projects coordinator for the city's community and family resources department, said the program is not only about teaching kids how to garden, but teaching them to be more comfortable around vegetables and more inclined to make healthy eating choices.

Archer said the program, which is sponsored by the Commission on the Status of Black Males, acquaints children with insects and teaches them to be more independent, as they learn to apply limited fertilizers, weed and stake the plants themselves.

"It's something they won't ever forget, I hope," Archer said.

There are still a few open spaces in the program. Interested parents may call 856-0369 to find out more information about involving their children.

Out and About, Nov. 22, 2012

HELPING OUT

WHAT: "Call Out" for mentors

WHEN: 6 p.m. Wednesday

WHERE: Monroe County History Center, 202 E. Sixth St.

MORE: Adult males, particularly African American males, are invited by the Commission on the Status of Black Males and Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Central Indiana to the "Call Out" to learn about this partnership and how they can mentor and positively influence young African-American youth. The event will include testimonials from the Rev. Dennis Laffoon, pastor at Bethel AME Church, and Charlie Nelms, former vice president for Institutional Development and Student Affairs for Indiana University. Big Brothers Big Sisters will be on hand to sign up adult mentors. For more, contact Craig Brenner at brennerc@bloomington.in.gov or 349-3471.
