

The Iowa African-American Journal

Volume 8, Issue 2

Winter 2002/Spring 2003

Hello, Good-bye, Hello

Commissioners

Beverly Allen

Des Moines—term expires April 2004

George C. Baugh

Pella—term expires April 2006

Theresa Clark-Kline

Ft. Madison—term expires April 2004

Jamie Howard

Davenport—term expires April 2004

Isaiah Johnson

Denison—term expires April 2006

Vacant

term expires April 2004

Jerome Thomas

Dubuque—term expires April 2004

Vacant

term expires April 2004

Vacant

term expires April 2006

Dr. Ruth E. White, ex officio
Director

Department of Human Rights

Staff

Kim Cheeks

*Interim Director
Program Planner*



Dr. Ruth E. White

It was scarcely six months ago that I began the job as Director of the Commission on the Status of African-Americans. In spite of having completed a successful career as an educator, I felt totally unschooled, like a visitor from another planet, peering uncertainly over the alien landscape of state government. It was truly a very different world. I did learn early on, however, that whatever the undertaking, it is most often the human element that makes it or breaks it. That adage holds true in this job. Everyone, from the Governor on welcomed me. Maybe it was because this job had been vacant for so long— people were just glad to see somebody in it! Whatever the reason, the community was warmly accepting, and if state government as an entity remained foreign, the people who make it work, helped me to adjust. I am particularly grateful for and thankful to Kim Cheeks, Program Planner for the division, because she not only had kept the ball rolling for a year all by herself, but also because she never once took advantage of the many opportunities she had to point out my shortcomings. She was and is extremely supportive, and a very good teacher to me.

So while the first six months were very busy ones for me, learning what I like to call “the lay of the land”, I guess there really is no rest for the weary, because as of the

first of April, I found myself at the bottom of that steep learning curve again as I embarked upon the challenges incumbent in Directing the Department of Human Rights. Let me hasten to assure anyone who reads this that this move was in no way a result of disenchantment with my former job. It is just difficult to say no when the Governor asks for something. It was a feeling not dissimilar to what I felt when my principal whom I highly respect, called me in to his office, and asked me to take on yet another responsibility. It was not something that I would have sought out to do, but I felt that if he thought I could do the job, then I should try to do the job. I will try to direct the Department of Human Rights— but not without insisting that the Division on the Status of African Americans not be left languishing again. Kim has consented to step in as Interim Director while the search for a permanent one is on going. That makes me feel much better about leaving a job that I really like.

I know that the new responsibilities will keep me quite busy, but they cannot squelch the passionate concerns surrounding issues relevant to African Americans that drew me to state government in the first place. I will continue to serve ex officio with the Commission, and will no doubt continue to have a hand in at the Division level until someone is hired permanently.

This is the first newsletter we have issued since I came on board, so it is appropriate that I officially say Hello. I vacated the position in April, so a good-bye is also warranted. And the next time we meet, it will be Hello again—just from a different angle.

Citizens Needed to Serve on State Boards and Commissions

The Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans (ICSAA) is currently seeking to fill 3 vacancies. Like all other state boards and commissions, the fundamental objective of the agency is to provide much needed citizen input into the process of state government. The primary responsibilities for ICSAA commissioners include attending day-long meetings which are held on a quarterly basis and serving on at least one

subcommittee. About half of the quarterly meetings are held in Des Moines and the rest are held in other parts of the state.

Once selected, individual commissioners are appointed by the Governor, must be confirmed by the Senate, and serve a four-year term. The process begins with an application that can be accessed from the

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14th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 2003 Ceremony



January 21 through 24th was declared Dr. King week and January 20, 2003 as Dr. King day in Iowa. The State of Iowa celebrated its 14th year commemoration of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The event was held at the State of Iowa Historical Building, commencing with the signing of the proclamation by the Honorable Tom Vilsack, Governor.

The opening welcome was given by the Master of Ceremonies, Franklin Colbert, student at Roosevelt High School. Reverend James Newby of Plymouth Congregational Church, Des Moines, followed with a prayer. Governor Vilsack gave a brief address touching upon bridging the achievement gap of African American youth in Iowa. Mt. Olive Baptist Church Youth Choir of Des Moines offered a musical selection.



Deborah Berry
Keynote speaker

Cherie Nelson-Martin, friend, colleague, and columnist for the Waterloo Courier, rendered a powerful, and stimulating, reading/introduction for keynote, newly elected State Representative, Deborah Berry. Berry, a Waterloo native, gave an inspiring address touching on her experiences as a youth and how the philosophies of Dr. King were instrumental in her achievements as an African American woman.

The presentation of the Dr. M. L. King, Jr. Lifetime Achievement Awards was next on the program. Dr. Ruth White, Director of the Division on the Status of African-Americans made the presentations. The recipients for 2003 included: Joseph Ellis, Director of Equity, Iowa Department of Personnel in Des Moines, for Lifetime Achievement Award. Outside In: African-American History in Iowa, 1838-2000, and The PEP Academy each received the Outstanding Service Project Awards. The award recipients were selected based on nomination forms submitted by community members who wanted to recognize these individuals or organizations for showing a commitment to community service.

Following the awards recognition, the choir delivered another selection and closing remarks were given by Kim Cheeks, Department of Human Rights. The benediction was then given by Dr. Newby. St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church youth presented a rendition of the Negro National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" and culminated with "We Shall Overcome" as the attendees processed to the atrium.



This annual program could not be presented without the help of the following fellow State of Iowa employees: Cheeko Camel, Department of Transportation; Janice Edmunds-Wells, Department of Public Health; Steve Pennington, Department of Natural Resources; Tim Fitzgibbon, Iowa College Student Aid Commission; Terra Levell, Department of Agriculture; Scott Moline, Iowa Law Enforcement Academy; and Crystal Woods, Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy.



Dr. Hal Chase and participating writers of "Outside In" accepting from Dr. White for outstanding Service Project



Joseph Ellis accepting award from Dr. Ruth E. White



Steve Johnson accepting award from Dr. White for outstanding Service Project

Iowa Legislature News

The 80th General Assembly has come to a close, and in this session, for the first time in Iowa history, three members of the 150 were African American. House Democrats, Deborah Berry of Waterloo, Wayne Ford of Des Moines, and Helen Miller of Fort Dodge, represented the voices of over 61,000 black Iowans. The issues supported by all ranged from Education, to Economics, to Health Care, to Rights for the elderly. While the majority of each chamber is Republican, this session added a long overdue, needed, and diverse viewpoint from these minority legislators.

For a complete list and history of all bills sponsored this session and how to contact your legislator, visit www.legis.state.ia.us.



Representative
Deborah Berry, Waterloo



Representative
Wayne Ford, Des Moines



Representative
Helen Miller, Fort Dodge

Some Key Legislation Impacting African American Iowans

HF 180 a bill for an act relating to character education and service learning in Iowa's elementary and secondary schools.

Signed by Governor April 11, 2003

SF 106 a bill for an act relating to collecting and disseminating information concerning motor vehicle stops.

In a subcommittee since February 12, 2003

SF 172 a bill for an act relating to the establishment of a public charter school pilot program and providing effective and applicability dates.

Passed House April 14, 2003

Passed Senate April 17, 2003

Message from Senate April 18, 2003

Mark Your Calendars

State of Black Iowa Initiative Hosted Statewide Focus Health Hearings April Thru June 2003

The State of Black Iowa Initiative hosted a statewide health hearing, April 9th, at the American Cancer Society headquarters located at 8364 Hickman Road in Clive, Iowa.

Following the statewide focused hearing will be hearings in Ames, Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Dubuque, Fort Dodge, Iowa City, Mason City, Sioux City, and Waterloo.

For a schedule of the other hearings contact Jonathan Narcisse
515-280-8092 or 515-707-2248

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Zeta Kappa Lambda Chapter And Zeta Kappa Lambda Education Foundation, Inc.

To host the 2003 Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Midwestern Region Leadership Development Citizenship Education Institute, June 20-22, 2003, Drake University Campus, Des Moines. The theme for this year's institute is "Youth Leadership Development: Facing Responsibilities for the 21st Century".

The Institute will focus on preparing youth to assume leadership roles in their communities and the nation.

For more information and registration materials, contact Donald D. Butler, LDI Director at 515-965-0440 or 515-229-1848

Registration materials can also be downloaded at www.alpha-midwest.org

14th Education Trust National "Zap the Gap" Conference

November 6 - 8, 2003
Grand Hyatt Hotel Washington, DC

Goal: Closing the Achievement Gap that separates low-income students and students of color from other young Americans

Information:
http://www.edtrust.org/main/conf_2003nov/conf2.asp
or 202-293-1217 or 510-465-6444 or mpointer@edtrust.org

MARK YOUR CALENDARS








**September 30 thru
October 2, 2003**

The African American Male National Council,
an affiliate of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, in conjunction with
the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males presents the

6th Annual African-American Male National Conference
Educating the Black Male: Breaking the Cycle

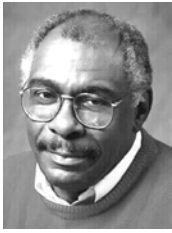
September 30–October 2, 2003
8:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
Marriott East Hotel
Indianapolis, Indiana

Keynote Speakers
Dick Gregory
Activist/Comedian
Na'im Akbar, Ph.D.
Psychology Department—Florida State University
Dennis Watson
National Black Youth Leadership Council

For more information, please contact the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males
at: (317) 234-1389 or e-mail: [jevans2@fssa.state.in.us](mailto:jevens2@fssa.state.in.us)
www.IN.gov/icssbm

Former Commissioner Jim Hester Dies



Jim Hester, longtime leader in the Davenport community, died on Thursday, November 14, 2002. Jim served eight years on the Commission and was a member of the Davenport School Board for twelve years. Jim was very active on numerous boards and was inducted into the Quad-City Sports Hall of Fame in 1999, for his years as a National Football League player.

Jim's leadership will be missed by all who knew him and who had the privilege of gracing his path. He is survived by his wife Christine, and four children.

African American Museum and Cultural Center Director Leaving Cedar Rapids

Joseph McGill, Jr., Executive Director of the African American Museum and Cultural Center served his last day as Director on May 7, 2003. McGill, who is also a Status of African-Americans Commissioner, appointed in May of 2000, has accepted a position as the Program Officer for the National Trust for Historic Preservation in his native, Charleston, South Carolina. Joe traveled throughout Iowa raising over a million dollars to build the museum and collected artifacts to be stored in the museum. Joes' love for history, caused him to be a subject in the History Channel documentary, The Unfinished Civil War, which examined the participation of African Americans in their own fight for freedom. He also performed short monologues, around Iowa, from the point of view of an African American soldier. His participation on the Commission will be greatly missed.

Citizens Needed to Serve on State Boards and Commissions

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Governor's website at www.state.ia.us/governor/boards. Applicants may apply for positions on more than one board or commission based on their individual interests or expertise.

African-Americans in Iowa are needed to participate on the boards and commissions that shape policies that affect people of color, such as economic development, health and education. Application forms may be obtained on the internet site listed above or by calling 515-281-0215.

The next quarterly Commission Meeting will be held in the fall. Please contact the division office at 515-281-7283 or 800-351-4659 for the date, time, and location of the next meeting.

Please help us update our mailing list!

One of Governor Vilsacks goals for 2003 was to make Iowa a digital state and 100% E for state government. Do we have your email or updated mailing address? If we don't, will you please complete the attached and return with your updates via telephone at 800-351-4659, 515-281-7283, by fax 515-242-6119, or email to dhr.icsaa@dhr.state.ia.us.

Current mailing name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone: work / home _____

Fax number / E-mail address _____

**IOWA COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS**

Department of Human Rights
Lucas State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319

Staff:
Kim Cheeks, Interim Administrator

Phone: 515-281-7283 or 800-351-4659
Fax: 515-242-6119
Website: www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa
Email: dhr.icsaa@dhr.state.ia.us

Winter 2002/Spring 2003

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Across Black Iowa...

The Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans needs your support!

Please use my/our gift to support the following:

- Printing costs
 Educational, Health, Economic, or Criminal Justice Programs

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone (home & business): _____

Email: _____

Payment Options:

- My Check or Money Order for \$ _____ is Enclosed

Please make payable to the Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans

Please include my/our name in the Annual Report _____ Yes _____ No