



Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans

The Iowa African-American Journal

Volume 8, Issue 1

Spring/Fall 2002

Commissioners

Beverly Allen

Des Moines—term expires April 2004

George C. Baugh

Pella—term expires April 2006

Deborah Berry

Waterloo—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

Joseph McGill

Cedar Rapids—term expires April 2004

Jerome Thomas

Dubuque—term expires April 2004

Robert Tyson

Waterloo—term expires April 2004

Rose Vasquez, ex officio

Director, Department of Human Rights

Staff

Kim Cheeks

Program Planner

Dr. Ruth E. White

Director

Inside this issue:

MLK 2002 Ceremony	2
2003 MLK Nomination Forms	3-4
DM School Board Elections	5
Across Black Iowa ...	6

Ruth White appointed new ICSAA director

On June 13, Governor Thomas Vilsack announced the appointment of Dr. Ruth E. White of Cedar Rapids as the new Director of the Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans, replacing former Director Traevana Potter-Hall, who resigned in July of 2001. White, who has taught in Indiana, Illinois, at the University of Iowa, and more recently at Cedar Rapids Washington High School, comes to the commission with a strong educational and community-oriented background.

"I am confident that Ruth White will work hard to ensure the integrity of the Status of African-Americans," Vilsack said. "Ruth brings to the Commission on the Status of African-Americans the necessary experience to continue the growth of the commission."

After receiving her bachelors and masters degree from Southern Illinois University, White received a Ph.D. in English from the University

of Iowa. She is a member of the Regional Board of Directors of the College Board, heads the Academy for Scholastic and Personal Success, and is the Contributing Editor for Multicultural Content for the Rising Star Project for Pearson Education, in addition to many other community and civic activities, including coreographing and participating in local theater.

"I am looking forward to my new role as the Division Administrator of the Status of African-Americans," White said. "I am excited to continue my work to improve the quality of life for Iowa's African American population."

Dr. White can be contacted at the ICSAA office in the Lucas State Office Building at (515) 281-7283, or toll-free at 800-351-4659, and you can find out more information about her and the commission by visiting www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa.



Dr. Ruth White

Governor Vilsack appoints commissioners

The commissioners and staff of the Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans are pleased to welcome three additions: Deborah Berry of Waterloo, George C. Baugh of Pella, and Jamie Howard of Davenport.

Berry is a City Council Member and Community Education Site Coordinator in Waterloo and replaces outgoing commissioner James Hester of Davenport. Howard is a City Council Member in Davenport, and

will finish the term of former commissioner Angela Gravely-Smith of Iowa City. Baugh, from Pella, filled an open post, replacing Camille Scully of Waterloo.

There are currently no vacancies on the commission. If you are interested in serving on a board or commission, please contact the office of Governor Vilsack. For more information, call (515) 281-5211, or see www.state.ia.us/governor/boards.

Martin Luther King, Jr. 2002 Awards Ceremony

January 21, 2002 marked the 13th year for Iowa's annual celebration commemorating the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This year the event was held at the Iowa State Historical Building in Des Moines. It began with our Lt. Governor, the Honorable Sally Pederson, signing the proclamation that declaring January 21, 2002 as Dr. King Day and January 22 through 25th as Dr. King Week in Iowa.



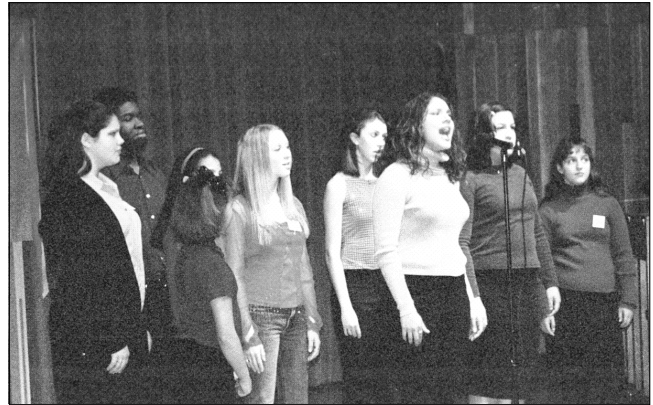
Millard Southern, a student at Drake University, gives the keynote address.

After the proclamation signing, the traditional bell-ringing presentation was led by Scott Moline, a representative of the planning committee for the MLK, Jr. Day. Lt. Governor Pederson assisted the children chosen to ring the simulated bells for the audience. The Heritage Youth Choir of Des Moines led attendees in singing "We Shall Overcome," and all present proceeded into the auditorium for the remainder of the event.

The program opened with a welcome and explanation of the theme by Sharaine Weathers, a student at Merrill Middle School. Next, Jordan Rabon, a Hiatt Middle School student from Des Moines, read a prayer. The Heritage Youth Choir sang a few more selections, and Lt. Governor Pederson made a few brief remarks before giving the stage to the keynote speaker. The keynote address was given by Millard Southern, a student at Drake University, Des Moines. Millard has completed his junior year,



Lt. Governor Sally Pederson reads the MLK holiday proclamation.



The Heritage Youth Choir of Des Moines sings during the beginning of the MLK ceremony.

majoring in Economics.

Ike Johnson, Chair of the Commission on the Status of African-Americans, presided over the presentation of the MLK Lifetime Achievement Awards. The recipients for 2002 included Marion Coleman – Director of Equity for the Iowa City Community School District, Leo Roof, former Mayor in Waterloo, and Rudy Simms – Director of the National Conference for Community and Justice in Des Moines.

There were no recipients for outstanding community service projects this year, but nomination forms are available for both awards for the 2003 ceremony.

Following the awards recognition, the choir led the audience in two more musical selections. Rose Vasquez, the Director of the Iowa Department of Human Rights, and Kim Cheeks, Program Planner for the Commission on the Status of African-Americans, gave brief closing remarks. As the final conclusion to the ceremony, a benediction was given by Father Michael Hess of Des Moines.



Lt. Governor Sally Pederson and ICSAA Chair Isaac Johnson present Rudy Simms Jr., top, and Marian Coleman, bottom, with the Martin Luther King Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award. The award is given to honor those who show commitment to promoting racial harmony and justice in their communities.





Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award 2003 Nomination Form

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ceremony is a state celebration sponsored by the Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans. The program includes participating in the nationwide bell -ringing ceremony and features special guests, entertainment, refreshments and the presentation of the Fifth Annual MLK Lifetime Achievement Awards. The awards recognize individuals who have demonstrated commitment to the vision of Dr. King by promoting the racial equality of all people of Iowa. In order to be considered to receive this award, one must have demonstrated a lifetime commitment to diversity and inclusion in his or her community and in the State of Iowa.

Please type or print neatly.

Nominee:

Name _____

Title/Organization (if applicable) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone (home) _____ Telephone (office) _____

Person submitting nomination:

Name _____

Title/Organization (if applicable) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone (home) _____ Telephone (office) _____

Include the following with the completed nomination form:

- A summary of the nominee's contributions that reflect the theme of the award;
- Three (3) letters of support;
- A biographical sketch of the nominee (a resume may be used); and
- Three other items of supportive material: This could include, but is not limited to, pertinent newspaper and/or magazine articles, primary works, published material, etc.

Application materials must be postmarked no later than December 3, 2002. Mail to:

**Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans
Department of Human Rights
Lucas State Office Bldg.
Des Moines, IA 50319**

If you have any additional questions, please call Kim Cheeks at (515)-281-3274 or (800)-351-4659

Email: kim.cheeks@dhr.state.ia.us

Visit our website at www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa

**2003
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Service Project**

☐ Individual ☐ Group (Please attach additional pages if necessary)

Name of Project _____ Contact person _____

Group participants _____

Address (if a group, complete for all names) _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email address _____

Brief description of service project _____

Date project started _____

Please feel free to submit photographs, videos, or any promotional items involved with your project.
Note: these items will not be returned.

Record the total number of hours dedicated to your community service project.

<u>Month 1</u>	<u>Month 2</u>	<u>Month 3</u>	<u>Month 4</u>
Week 1 _____	Week 1 _____	Week 1 _____	Week 1 _____
Week 2 _____	Week 2 _____	Week 2 _____	Week 2 _____
Week 3 _____	Week 3 _____	Week 3 _____	Week 3 _____
Week 4 _____	Week 4 _____	Week 4 _____	Week 4 _____

Application materials must be postmarked no later than December 3, 2002. Mail to:

Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans

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

If you have any additional questions, please call Kim Cheeks at (515)-281-3274 or (800)-351-4659

Email: kim.cheeks@dhr.state.ia.us

Visit our website at www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa

Des Moines begins transformational School Board race

Three seats are open in September 10's Des Moines School Board elections, and the pool of candidates running is more diverse than ever before, promising to change the face of the leaders of Des Moines' education. While six members of the seven-member board live on the West side of Des Moines, only three of the eight candidates do, coming instead from the South and East sides of Des Moines. While all members of the current school board are White, there are two African American candidates, Mary Ann Spicer and Matthew Harvey. In the past few elections, voter turnout has been very low in areas in the East and South of the city. In an effort to increase knowledge of the upcoming elections and the candidates running, Spicer and Harvey are profiled below. Be sure to check out public forums for the school board elections coming up soon in your area.

Mary Ann Spicer

Mary Ann Spicer, a Des Moines local, graduate of Drake University, and currently a state employee, brings teaching and parenting experience in the Des Moines Public School District to her bid for the School Board. A former high school English

teacher who was twice nominated for outstanding teacher awards, she also serves on the Public School Black Advisory Committee and is a member of Public School Sisters for Success, a program that supports Black women high school students.

"I would like to continue with the proud tradition of raising the bar in education for all Des Moines students and this would mean leaving no child behind while constantly improving the standards of measure," Spicer said. "Surely there are other best practices we can emulate in order to improve the reading, math and science efficiency for all students in all buildings."

Outside of her experience in the classroom, Spicer also has a background in community organizing, and promises to focus on establishing school board ties with community groups and members from all sectors of Des Moines. She stressed the importance of communication – between teachers, administrators, students, and parents, not just focusing on a top-down model. Discipline has also become important, as she believes that the enforcement measures for schools' disciplinary policies need to change in order to make them fair for all students.

Spicer hopes to "win back the support of our communities," as we "restore our public schools back to their rightful place as being one of the leading corridors of learning."

For more information on Spicer's campaign and ideas for the school board, please visit her website at www.spicereducation.com.



Matthew Harvey

Matthew Harvey has a knowledge of the unique difficulties and opportunities presented by contemporary urban education. A graduate of the Detroit Public School system and Michigan State University, he is currently a

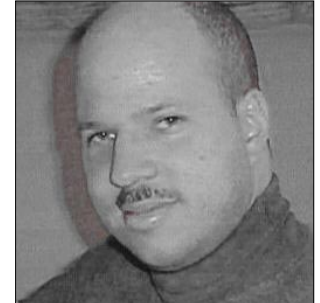
consultant serving in the Army Reserve, as he has for the past 16 years. While waiting to report to Army Officer Basic Course in Michigan, he was a substitute teacher in a Detroit high school. He has previously served three years on a School Board in an urban Michigan district, and he was recognized by the Michigan Association of School Boards as a Certified Board Member, was given the Award of Merit, and the Advocacy Skills Specialty Certificate.

He believes that these experiences have given him insight into the "challenges and opportunities that exist in today's classroom." As a former board member in a district with similar urban characteristics that faced the problems of education, he feels that he has developed his own "skills as a board member," and plans to lead "by example by demonstrating a dedication to life-long learning and community service."

Harvey has held previous positions in industry and in government (including serving as Staff Officer for the Assistant Secretary of the Army in Washington, D.C.) that he believes helps him bring a "unique perspective of business, technology, and education," to the serving on the school board. While at Michigan State, he earned a Certificate in Educational Technology, including courses in the Essential Elements of Effective Instruction.

In the community, Harvey has volunteered at weekend enrichment programs that encourage university attendance, and has been an after-school tutor in a church-sponsored program.

Harvey urges all Des Moines residents to honor, value and recognize our schools, students, and community.



IOWA COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS

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

Spring/Fall 2002

Staff:

Dr. Ruth E. White, Director
Kim Cheeks, Program Planner

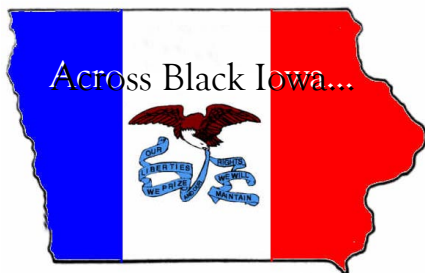
Phone: 515-281-7283 or 800-351-4659

Fax: 515-242-6119

Website: www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa

Email: dhr.icsaa@dhr.state.ia.us

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
DES MOINES, IA
PERMIT No. 1195



•**Ames**—W. Ray Richardson became the first Black school superintendant in Iowa when he was named to head the Ames Community School District in March. Richardson is the only Black administrator in the 4,750-student Ames District. He will begin his first school year in September in Ames, where five percent of enrolled students are Black.

•**Polk County**—Odell McGhee took office as a Polk County District Court Judge in March, making him just the fifth African American judge ever appointed in Iowa. He

was nominated and rejected over thirty times before persevering to become only the third Black judge appointed in Polk County.

•**Statewide**—The rate at which non-White students dropped out of high schools continued to rise in 2001. African American students dropped out at a rate of 7.5 percent, and Hispanic students at a rate of 9.3 percent, both significant increases over the numbers of students that quit school during 2000. Only 2.3 percent of White students and 2.7 percent of all Iowan students left school. Iowa's dropout rates are still much less than national averages for minorities and all students, but the growth causes reasons for alarm and concern.

•**Statewide**—Iowa became second in the nation in incarceration rates for Blacks in 2001, as Wisconsin led the U.S. with 4,058 incarcerated Black persons per 100,000 Black residents. In Iowa, 3,302 Black persons were

incarcerated per 100,000, and Texas was third with 3,287 for every 100,000 Black residents. Iowa had the highest rates of Black incarceration in the nation before Wisconsin's rate grew larger.

•**Statewide**—June 15, 2002 was Iowa's first Juneteenth National Freedom Day, after Governor Vilsack signed a bill in April that proclaimed the third Saturday in June a state holiday. Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration of the end of slavery, dating back to 1865. On June 19, Union troops entered Galveston, TX, with news that the Civil War had ended and all slaves were free, nearly two and a half years after the emancipation proclamation. Governor Vilsack urged government entities, civic organizations, and schools to observe, commemorate, and celebrate the day.