

The Iowa African-American Journal

Volume 9, Issue 1

Winter 2003/Spring 2004

New Director Announced

Commissioners

Beverly Allen

Des Moines—term expires April 2008

George C. Baugh

Pella—term expires April 2006

Dr. Michael Blackwell

Waterloo—term expires April 2006

Theresa Clark-Kline

Ft. Madison—term expired April 2004

Jamie Howard

Davenport—term expires April 2008

Isaiah Johnson

Denison—term expires April 2006

Thomas Simmons

term expires April 2008

Jerome Thomas

Dubuque—term expires April 2008

Loretha Teggatz

term expires April 2008

Vacant

term expires April 2006

Dr. Ruth E. White, ex officio

Director

Department of Human Rights

Staff

Kimberly Baxter

Director

Kim Checks

Program Coordinator



Kimberly Baxter
Appointed July 2003

DES MOINES – The Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans along with Governor Tom Vilsack and Lt. Governor Pederson announce the appointment of

Kimberly Baxter the new Director of the Division on the Status of African-Americans. She began work in August 2003.

“Kimberly Baxter is the right choice to lead the Division on the Status of African-Americans,” Governor Vilsack said. “She has extensive experience as an administrator and advocate, and has innovative ideas for improving the delivery of services to African-Americans in this state.”

“Kimberly Baxter understands the challenges facing African-Americans in Iowa, and she has the skills and the ingenuity to develop effective new solutions,” Lt. Governor Pederson said. “Her leadership and insight will be especially valuable as we work to correct

the academic achievement gap among poor and minority children, and address the high incarceration rates for minority groups.”

A graduate of Iowa State University, Baxter has worked in a variety of positions in federal and state government, most recently as a Financial Assistance/Contract Specialist for the Chicago Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Energy. Prior to that position, she served as an Executive Officer for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division. She has also worked as a Program Planner (Team Leader) for the Iowa DNR Energy Office and as a Program Planner for the Iowa Emergency Management Division.

“I am honored to be appointed as the Director of the Division on the Status of African-Americans,” Baxter said. “I look forward to the challenges and opportunities of this position and to working toward improving the quality of life and addressing the needs and concerns of African-Americans in Iowa.”

Two Commissioner Vacancies Filled

Loretha Teggatz, laborer, and independent contractor for the ill and handicapped in Fort Dodge and Thomas Simmons, principal at Martin Luther King, Jr Academy in Des Moines who resides in Adel, have been named to the Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans, with terms to begin on May 1, 2004. Jamie Howard, Davenport, Beverly Allen, Des Moines, and Jerome Thomas, Dubuque were all reappointed to another term beginning May 1, 2004. The Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans (ICSAA) is

currently seeking to fill 1 vacancy. 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.

(Continued on page 5)

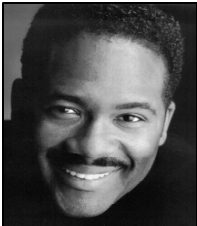
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15th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ceremony

January 15, 2004 marked the 75th birthday of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and on January 19th the State of Iowa presented its 15th annual observance of the national holiday, held at the Iowa Historical Building in Des Moines.

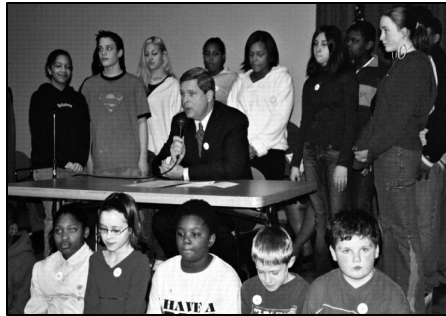
Opening Remarks were made by Kimberly Baxter, newly appointed Director of The Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans. Governor Thomas Vilsack signed the proclamation, declaring January 19 through 25, 2004 as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Week, followed by a brief address. A prayer was rendered by Reverend Dr. Michael Blackwell of Waterloo. Hoover High School of Des Moines' Harmony Choir gave two selections. David Meeks, MLK Planning Committee, explained the theme of the 2004 ceremony. After which John Paul Chaisson-Cardenas introduced the speaker for the day, Greg Alan Williams,



Greg Alan Williams
Keynote Speaker

Emmy Award winning actor, educator, and author. Mr. Williams sent an empowering message, now is the time for those who have some power and influence to stand up, step out, and speak up to change what is going on in America today.

The awards ceremony came next on the program, as Dr. Ruth White, Director of Human Rights explained the significance of each award.



Dr. White presented the award for Lifetime Achievement Award to Richard Hayes, Executive Director of the Sioux City Human Rights Commission. The recipient for outstanding Service Projects was awarded to Albert Williams, The Traveling Artist, of Des Moines. The award recipients were selected based on nomination forms submitted by community

members who wanted to recognize these individuals for showing a commitment to community service. Closing remarks were made by Kim Cheeks, ICSAA and Chair of the MLK planning committee. The Benediction was rendered by Reverend Beatrice Hines of Bethel AME Church in Des Moines. The traditional bell-ringing took place after the benediction from youth of Bethel and St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal churches of Des Moines, instructed by Beth Ann Edwards. "We Shall Overcome" was chanted as the attendees left the auditorium.

The following individuals attributed to the success of this annual program: Cheeko Camel, Department of Transportation; Janice Edmunds-Wells, Department of Public Health; Sharon Tahtinen, Department of Natural Resources; Tim Fitzgibbon, Iowa College Student Aid Commission; Terra Levell, Department of Agriculture; Donna Graves, Iowa Workforce Development; David Meeks, Department of Human Services, and Crystal Woods, Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy.



Richard E. Hayes accepting
Lifetime Achievement award from
Kimberly Baxter



Albert Williams, and daughter
accepting award for Service Project
from Kimberly Baxter

Iowa Legislature News

Legislation affecting African American Iowans:

Bills signed by the Governor:

?Honoring the National Bar Association for its important contributions to the legal profession and the judicial process. The National Bar Association was organized on August 1, 1925 in Des Moines, Iowa, to serve as an organization for African American lawyers. (HR 142 signed by Governor)

?Providing for the establishment of a commission on the status of Iowans of Asian and Pacific Islander heritage within the Department of Human Rights (HF2055, substituted SF2188 signed by Governor)

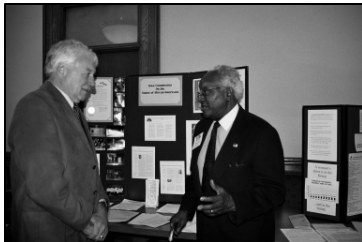
Bills that died:

?Automatic restoration of voting rights for felons upon completion of sentence and parole. (HF402, HF178, SF311, HF445)

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

Legislative Breakfast

In February, the Iowa Commissions on the Status of African-Americans, Status of Women, and Latino Affairs hosted a breakfast with the legislators. The purpose of the event was to allow commissioners a brief conversation highlighting the goals and priorities of each commission. In spite of a snow storm that hit central Iowa, nineteen senators and thirty eight representatives joined the commissioners and division staffs for an informative session. SAA looks forward to meeting next session with the legislators.



Office of
Citizens' Aide Ombudsman
Des Moines, Iowa

Have a complaint or question about government in Iowa? The Office of Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman may be able to help.

The Ombudsman's office was created by the Iowa Legislature. Its purpose is to make sure Iowa's governmental agencies are acting legally and being fair and reasonable.

The Ombudsman's office can answer questions and try to resolve complaints about most state and local government agencies. Some issues they can look into include tax issues, public assistance, general relief, drivers licensing and vehicle registration, child or adult protection, and child support. They can also give you information if you don't know where to go for help. The Ombudsman can make recommendations to agencies and the Iowa Legislature to improve agency policies, practices, and procedures. However, they cannot be your attorneys or give you legal advice.

There is no fee for the Ombudsman's services. They will treat each person's complaint fairly and objectively, and, when possible, in a confidential manner.

You can call the Ombudsman's office if you want to know more about their office. They have brochures and annual reports which describe the office in more detail.

If you have a question or complaint, you can call the office toll-free at 1-888-IA-OMBUD (426-6283) or at (515) 281-3592. You can also write or stop by their office at Ola Babcock Miller Building, 1112 East Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. The office has a TTY system which can be reached using the toll-free number or at (515) 242-5065. The fax number is (515) 242-6007. Internet users can contact the office at: Ombudsman@legis.state.ia.us.

Racial Profiling Town Meetings

Community members gathered at Creative Visions, in Des Moines, to express feelings of anger, confusion and fear in relation to law enforcement at a public meeting organized by the Iowa State Patrol and the Department of Human Rights. The meeting was the first in a series of four planned throughout the state to discuss the findings of a racial profiling study completed last April by the Iowa State Patrol.

After examining traffic stop data, collected between October 2000 and March 2002, the Iowa Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning found that while minority drivers are no more likely than white motorists to be pulled over by the Iowa State Patrol, they are more likely to have their vehicles checked. More than 10 percent of all Latino drivers stopped were subjected to a vehicle search. 7.1 percent of all African Americans stopped had their vehicles searched, 6 percent of American Indians vehicles were searched, and 3 percent for Asian drivers. Members of the community shared their personal experiences with law enforcement officers. The information collected at this meeting and other scheduled meetings around the state, will be compiled and reviewed by the Iowa State Patrol, so as to see what they can do in training and education of the officers to work with the diverse communities statewide. To voice complaints or concerns regarding the city or county law enforcement agencies, contact the Office of the Citizen's Aide Ombudsman at 888-426-6283 or 515-242-5065.

Brown v. Board of Education 50th Anniversary

May 2004 marked the 50th anniversary of one of the United States Supreme Court's most significant decisions. On May 17, 1954, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Court decided that "separate is inherently unequal" in educational institutions. *Brown* changed the civil rights landscape in America forever.

The celebration began on April 30 with a special program that included a re-enactment of oral arguments made to the U.S. Supreme Court, at the Federal Courthouse in Des Moines. Throughout the month of May, the Iowa State Bar Association made presentation to school groups on the significance of the *Brown* decision as part of the annual "Ask Me What's Great About America" program. A series of events for school groups were held during the week of May 17 at the State Historical Building and the Federal Courthouse in Des Moines. The events included a play "The Question of *Brown*" that was commissioned by the Department of Cultural Affairs. Visit the Iowa State Bar Association website for tips on how to get involved in schools and the community: educators can find numerous resources to help teach students about *Brown*, at www.iowabar.org/brownvboard.nsf.

Edna M. Griffin Memorial Bridge



The Edna M. Griffin Memorial Bridge over I-235 near East Sixth Street was officially dedicated on May 10. Longfellow Elementary School, Iowa Commissions on the Status of African-Americans and Women, Iowa Department of Transportation, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom hosted a ceremony and reception to dedicate the new pedestrian bridge.

The ceremony was held at the north end of the pedestrian bridge. Speakers for the dedication included Lt. Governor Sally J. Pederson, Congressman Leonard Boswell, Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie, Longfellow students and members of the Griffin family. A ceremonial ribbon cutting by Longfellow students and a plaque unveiling was part of the ceremony. A reception followed the ceremony at the State Historical Building, 600 E. Locust St.

The name for the bridge, was selected as the winning entry in a bridge-naming contest sponsored by the Iowa DOT last fall. Mrs. Jenny Schiltz's fourth-grade class submitted the winning entry and earned the honor of cutting the

ceremonial ribbon and unveiling the plaque at the dedication.

Griffin was a teacher and civil-rights pioneer who was best known for refusing to leave a "whites-only" lunch counter in downtown Des Moines in 1948. Her efforts in organizing sit-ins, pickets and legal action against the drug store were instrumental in bringing about the enforcement of public accommodation laws in Des Moines. "I am proud that we are celebrating the ideals of freedom and equal rights by dedicating this bridge in honor of Mrs. Griffin's efforts in fighting injustice," said Beverly Allen, chair of the Commission on the Status of African-Americans. "May this remind us of the difference that one person's decision to stand up to injustice can make in the lives of others."

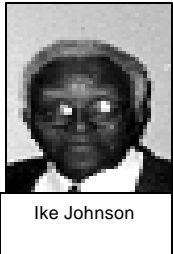
40th Anniversary of the U.S. Civil Rights Act

The 40th Anniversary of the passage of the 1964 United States Civil Rights Act was celebrated in conjunction with the annual Blues Fest, on the Mississippi River levee at LeClaire Park in Davenport, Iowa, July 2-4, 2004. This landmark law prohibits racial discrimination in public accommodations, publicly owned or operated facilities, employment and union membership, and voter registration.

The Civil Rights Celebration featured Dr. Ruth White, nationally recognized Civil Rights speaker, Reverend C.T. Vivian, SST Communications performing "Synergy from Others", Dr. Eddie Moore Jr. and included adult and children's activities in addition to Blues Bands and activities historically related to the Blues Fest.

The Civil Rights events were sponsored by: The Davenport Civil Rights Commission, Dubuque Human Rights Commission, Cedar Rapids Human Rights Commission, Mason City Human Rights Commission, Iowa Civil Rights Commission, The Iowa Department of Human Rights, Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans, Iowa Division of Persons with Disabilities and Division of Latino Affairs. Civil Rights events were supported in part by the Riverboat Development Authority and Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc.

Commissioner Profile



Ike Johnson

Isaiah (Ike) Johnson, was selected as Outstanding Older Worker 2003, by the Iowa Older Worker Council and Experience Works. Ike is 78 years young and works full time at the Denison Job Corps Center where he started working 11 years ago at the age of 67. Ike is currently serving as the Business Community Liaison. Ike has received the prestigious Paul Harris Fellow award in 2002, and serves on several committees at the local and state level. Unless you knew Ike prior to the loss of his legs in 1965, you would never know he was a double amputee. Ike lives by the belief that, we must "fill each forgiving moment with sixty seconds distance fully run", as written by Kipling, therefore making his accomplishments legion. Ike has served on the commission since 1999.

Two Commissioner Vacancies Filled

(Continued from page 1)

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 Governor's website at www.state.ia.us/governor/boards or by calling 515-281-0215. Applicants may apply for positions on more than one board or commission based on their individual interests or expertise.

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!

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.

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Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone: work / home _____

Fax number / E-mail address _____

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

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Winter 2003/Spring 2004

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