



Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission January 2012 Chronicle

Local group to celebrate Martin Luther King Day with focus on youth and community

An early morning, youth-centered observance of Martin Luther King Day on Monday, Jan. 16, will feature entertainment and awards presentations to those who embody the ideals of the sponsoring organization, the Vineland African American Community Development Corporation (VAACDC).

The free event, open to the public, takes place at Landis Middle school, 63 W. Landis Ave., Vineland, beginning at 8 a.m. and concluding at 10:30 a.m. with breakfast in the gym.

A banquet honoring pastors and their spouses will take place on Friday, Jan. 13, at the St. Anthony Community Center, 310 Wheat Rd., Vineland, at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$45; call 362-5849. Pastors and their spouses to be honored are: **Richard and Helen Myers, Damaris Perez, Darnell and Shameka Wise, Hopeton and Lora Bartley, Elder Hartley and Catherine Pernell, Khent and Michelle Holmes, Elder Haver and Pastor Lavada Soles, Alfred and Phyliss Comer, Apostle Dr. Darlene and Pastor Jeffrey Bryant, and Deion and Tiffanie Thrbak.**

At the Monday event, members of the Vineland High School African American Cultural League are spotlighted in the opening ceremony. Jeffry Lunsford, president, will give the welcoming address, and Andrea Glover, secretary, will read a poem. Terricita Bennett, vice



Charles Fisher, one of the "I Have a Dream" award winners.



Pearl Giordano, a "Rosa Parks Freedom Award" recipient.

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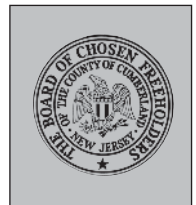
Rev. Khent Holmes and his wife Michelle, to be honored at the banquet for pastors and spouses on Friday, Jan. 13.



president, is master of ceremonies and will be assisted by Katali Segers, treasurer. Donsha Stafford will perform a "praise dance." Najee Wilson, vice president of the Vine-

land High Dance & Step group, will perform a selected titled "Soul Star" and will then join a hip hop dance group, "A- Plus." Winners of the
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Program salutes legacy of Martin Luther King

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“Young Dreamer Award,” given to those who have demonstrated a desire to achieve their goals, are: **Kye Douglas, Maryann Wallace, Donesah Stafford, Jordan Hart, Crystal Gonzalez, Najee Wilson and James Lee Pender.**

The “I Have a Dream” award, presented for those who have shown evidence of “keeping Dr. King’s dream alive,” said Alfred Porter, on the VAACDC planning committee,

will be given to Hassan Hamid-El, Major Robert Simpson, Deacon Kenneth Smith, Charles Fisher and Pat Finley.

Recipients of the “Rosa Parks Freedom Award,” given for members of the community who have taken a stand on an important issue are **Dr. Sonia Burgher-Gayle, Pearl Giordano and Wilma Nell Seabrook King.**

The group has been a Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission grant recipient since 2004.

Charles Lee Fisher

Charles writes, “I was born in 1950 in Orangeburg, S. C. At the age of 4 we moved to Vineland via Philadelphia. I attended Vineland public schools and graduated from Vineland Senior High, Class of 1969.

“My interests are broad and varied; therefore, I enjoyed learning whatever school had to offer. While attending public school, I excelled in art, math, science and all sports.

“An opportunity arose for me to attend college through the Upward Bound/ Martin Luther King Scholarship Program, at Glassboro State College (now Rowan University). While at GSC I tutored freshmen in the Upward Bound Program in mathematics. Although I didn’t want to be a teacher, I enjoyed the experience and the appreciation I received from my classmates. While in GSC I selected mathematics as my major.

“In 1972 the job market started to open up to minorities because of the work of many civil rights activists such as Dr. King. Many companies had to fill quotas set by the government. I was hired by New Jersey Bell, which offered a variety of training opportunities. I took full advantage of them. It wasn’t easy but I worked 31 years and 15 days before retirement.

“When I found time outside of work, I spent it volunteering, at the Vineland Police Athletic League. This is my 18th year, and I will continue to be there for the youth, just as my mentors were there for me.”

Dawn “Michelle” Holmes

“Michelle” describes herself as a devoted wife, mother, educator and mentor. She attended the Port Norris Schools until age 11. From that time, until 2005, she was a Millville resident and was educated in local public schools. It was during her early years that she discovered a love of children and a desire to teach.

After graduating from Rowan College of New Jersey with a B.A. degree in Elementary Education and sociology she began her professional career in education in 1996 in the Commercial Township Schools. In 2000, she was recognized and honored as the district’s “Teacher of the Year.” She currently teaches sixth grade Language Arts at Lakeside Middle School in Millville

Over the years, she has worked with the Cheerleading and Dance teams, the Drama Club, the Mentoring Committee and numerous other after-school clubs.

Pearl Giordano

Pearl has been with Limpert Bros., Vineland, for over 44 years, starting out as a clerk, and working up to Vice President and Executive General Manager under the late President Bob Limpert. She is now President, CEO and owner.

She is known as a dedicated political citizen, helping with most of the local campaigns, a community activist who is highly supportive of the local fire department, and is an honorary chief of the Vineland Fire Department.

She writes, “My spiritual side is very strong as well. I am very loyal and dedicated to Saint Pio. I visit the local shrine several times a week. I have had a radio program on 92.1 for going on 11 years, I talk about the healing miracles that have occurred at the shrine. I visit a lot of people in the hospital who are in transition and those in crisis.

“One of my devotions is to the seniors— I work with a group that prepares Christmas and Easter meals for three high rises and is working with the church to provide meals once a month to three high rises. I believe with all of my heart that one person can make a big difference in many lives. I believe that small businesses are the life blood of our country and a strong support network is the path to financial strength and success.”

Rev. Khent Holmes

Born and raised in Cumberland County, Rev. Holmes began playing the piano at age 13. Since that time, he has directed choirs in several churches, established music ministries and lent his talents to community and high school gospel choir ministries.

He is the founder of the Cumberland County College Gospel Choir, established in 1990. In June 1998, he founded Higher Praise Ministries with the goal of spreading the word of God through song. The group, *Khent Holmes and Higher Praise*, released its debut recording “Perfect Gift” in November 1998. Its most recent project, the “Seven Last Words in Harmony,” transformed the traditional concept of Good Friday Service to Christ’s final words, delivered through song.

He is now full-time minister of music at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Williamstown. He graduated from Cumberland County College and attended Philadelphia College of the Bible, Langhorne, Pa., and Morgan State University, Baltimore. He resides in Vineland with his wife Michelle and daughters Khendal and Khenedy.