

Lighting The Road To Freedom

New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

Data Zone



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August Wilson's Fences

September 23, 2006

40th Year

Volume 36

www.ladatanews.com

The Soul of New Orleans



**100 Days and
Counting**

**The Rebuilding of
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Saturday, September 30th, 2006

COVER STORY

Ray Nagin and Rebuilding New Orleans:
One-Hundred Days and Counting

Written By: Edwin Buggage | Photos By: Glenn Summers

Like sand passing through an hourglass so goes the days of the lives of many New Orleanians; where for many visible signs of progress is an anomaly and the road home seems one paved with obstacles and frustrations. One wouldn't be hard pressed to say that the lives of many New Orleanians over the past year have resembled a soap opera with all its melodrama. As the city has recently passed the One-Hundred day mark into the second administration of embattled New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin, continues his attempt to provide residents comfort and answers to many of the questions about the problems that continue to plague this devastated city.

One year after Hurricane Katrina, residents are still scattered about the country with a mix of hopefulness and hopelessness about the place they once called home. Many of the reports are not positive: a rising crime rate, the continuing problems with the school system and going to websites where fuzzy math is more the rule than the exception. Reports of calling 1-800 numbers to find the road home littered with roadblocks leading to nowhere, and continuously hearing our local Commander-in-Chief verbal gaffes that constantly put him on the wrong side of mainstream writer's pens and political pundit's commentaries. His critics charge his reign in office is a failing and ailing administration spiraling out of control. Frustration fills the heart, souls and minds of many, as desperation, despair and disappointment of what many

perceive as apathy on the part of every level of government is overflowing. While clearly some progress has occurred; the question becomes is it moving fast enough?

A question of housing

As many neighborhoods struggle to recover, housing remains a key issue to the city's recovery. In an exclusive interview with Data News Weekly Mayor Nagin talked frankly about many of the issues facing the city as it tries to rebuild. "In our one-hundred day plan one of the areas we wanted to focus on was the housing crunch so we have taken adjudicated and blighted properties and made those available to developers and individuals so right now we have twenty-five hundred of those in peoples hands that are now being redeveloped with a specific target of placing low and moderate income persons in these homes." "We are also working with HUD so that when we demolish public housing that there is a one for one replacement and we have those commitments."

Although the mayor has stated he is committed to affordable

housing many residents of public housing have voiced concerns about there right to return to the city. They see a blind eye being turned to their plight as they've staged protests in Iberville and more recently the still unoccupied St. Bernard Housing Development. Longtime New Orleans Community activist



and child advocate Jerome Smith says, "They want to close down public housing and move black people out to Michoud, but I feel concentration on Ray Nagin in these hundred days of the rebuilding is sort of parochial it's a narrow vision I think the major crisis is with our black children." With fervor in his voice rising to a feverish pitch he exclaims angrily, "You look at the Lafitte Project and you see two-thousand children disconnected from this city and if those children were white the country would be in an uproar this in my opinion is a national crisis."

Class, Race and the LRA

Race and class have been at the center of the debate about what happened in the city during and after Hurricane Katrina. Jerome Booker, a displaced New Orleans resident from the hollow shell of the once vibrant Ninth Ward now resides in Houston, Texas and is the host of 'Community Affairs' a radio show on Houston's KPFT 90.1 FM. He hears many of the issues that concern displaced New Orleanians; he is a vocal critic of the recovery effort, one that in his opinion is mired in red tape in addition to having racial overtones. "This time black people came together and voted for Nagin, but now what? Now that he's in office everything he's trying to do Governor Blanco is going to veto, and it's bureaucracy and red tape holding up progress for people to get back." "Also I think it's racial, I think the whites could sit around for four years and do nothing it won't affect them, if someone white was in office I believe we would see more progress than we have so far, and my question would be for those in leadership why are

they fighting over who controls what when it should be just about helping people?"

Months after the mayoral election, a bitter battle as Nagin pulled an upset victory against insurmountable odds, much of in the political and business community is at a stalemate. Nagin doesn't feel they're battle scars but think the plans of some were foiled by his victory, "I don't feel there are battle scars, but they haven't figured out how I won the election, and they are still trying to put their plans in place because there was a big power move in place to reorient resources and now they can't do that as quickly." Additionally as many residents desire to come home the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) has become a thorn in the side of some New Orleanians. The Road Home Program has so far provided a bumpy road filled with roadblocks that's slowing down the recovery in the city of New Orleans, one of its most vocal critics is Mayor Nagin, "I think the LRA has strategically set up another bureaucracy. Starting something like this from scratch with a volume level of 100,000 people they're not going to get much done anytime soon, also the process is too involved and overtaxing first you have to get fingerprinted, take a photo and go through a three hour interview and what have they done thus far awarded four and a half million dollars to one-hundred and ninety people divided equally that's twenty-three thousand dollars so the process is going to discourage

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY
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Please call (404) 223-5958 for subscription information.
Dated material two weeks in advance. Not responsible for publishing or return of unsolicited manuscripts or photos.

COVER STORY

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a lot of people because its not enough money to rebuild.”

Many residents have taken matters into their own hands because the government has not provided the tools and access to resources in an expeditious manner this state of affairs has frustrated State Representative Ann Duplessis who represents the devastated areas of New Orleans East and the Lower Ninth Ward. Duplessis has her own dim view of the federal government's response or lack thereof, “I have been very disappointed with the Federal Government's apathy toward rebuilding the Gulf Region.” But she commends the people and their own initiative in repairing their homes and trying to bring some sense of normalcy to their communities, “I am pleased whenever I see a person in my district has taken charge of their situation investing and re-investing their time and energy into the rehabilitation of their home or business.”

Equality and Access for Small Business

Pre-Katrina New Orleans was a city where small business once thrived but now are in a struggle to survive. Some entrepreneurs see this recovery as a great opportunity for African-Americans in business. William ‘Poppa’ Gant is Owner of the Afro House a local beauty salon, and ran for Council-at-Large in the last election running on a platform encouraging entrepreneurship and empowering small business. “I think everything could be faster with the recovery but I'm realistic enough to realize this was a very huge disaster and I think things are going along pretty swell myself, but like everything it could be better, but I think Nagin is doing a good job trying to get things done.” “I believe he can be trusted, when we go to him with plans, actions and ideas that can move our communities forward, he not only listens but he acts upon it.”

As the city is in recovery mode, and money is pouring into the city in contracts many small business feel left out of this economic windfall that has befallen the city. Jafus Smith Jr. is a local general contractor says, “I don't think our company is doing bad in terms of getting work right now, but when small companies bid on the contracts that's being awarded in the city African-American businesses rarely get them and I think that's wrong that in a city with this many African-Americans

that now so much money is coming in the city we can't get a larger piece of the economic pie with a city with a large African-American population and majority black elected leadership.”

This troubling trend is

the goals defined in the hundred day plan fails to deal with the larger human issues. In his view much of the improvement in the city has been done by entities outside of government, “In terms of gutting peoples homes,

“I feel concentration on Ray Nagin in these hundred days of the rebuilding is sort of parochial it's a narrow vision”

something Mayor Nagin is also trying to address; the problem of African-American business and access, “Right now we are in the process of awarding our city garbage contracts to two minority owned firms that covers most of the city's trash pickup.” “We are committed to helping minority businesses but the problem as I see it is the state and federal government doesn't have the same level of commitment and they have been awarding most of the contracts. We have been helping minority business as much as we can, but when they do get in it's at the very bottom where profit margins are not that high.”

While for some the goals and objectives of the Hundred day committee the details were sketchy at best former Mayoral Candidate Tom Watson who is a member of the Hundred Day Commission thinks the goals of the Hundred Day Commission were clear and partially successful, “I feel it set a tone for where we're going for the rest of this recovery season, When I say season I can't put years or months to it, but I think it has set a tone particularly in the areas of infrastructure that neighborhoods now have water and utilities, buses are back on line, although there not the way we want them to be totally because of RTA's problems. And of course the health concerns in terms of hospitals and psychiatric facilities are still minimal but there are plans to make some things happen so some things started and some things have to continue to be worked on so on the one hand I think it was a success.”

Stephen Bradberry, Head Organizer for the community group ACORN see it differently, he believes the city leadership is not doing enough to bring the residents back to the city, and that

rehabbing homes all these types of things in the recovery the city has not been perpetuated by the local, state or federal government. People who are back in the city are here because the help of non-governmental organizations.” He continues his criticism of Mayor Nagin's leadership, “If I had to rate him in this recovery effort I would give him a three and that would generous.” “People are not

back in their homes, and there is no indication on when or how people are going to get back to the city.” “At the local, state and federal level people who are in poor or minority communities are being left out of the rebuilding equation and the LRA and the leadership at city hall are holding up progress with their inaction and lack of decisiveness and it's the people who ultimately suffer.”

The criticism of the slow recovery Mayor Nagin says has some merit, but he feels that government is important but shouldn't be solely fueling this recovery, “I think over the history of the city, New Orleanians have been over dependent on government to fix everything and do everything and it just hasn't worked. Before Katrina our economy was limping along at best but we were headed in the right direction.” Continuing he says, “But for me this is the most empowering moment the city has ever had, and the best advice I got was from the U.S. Conference of Mayors Urban Design Team they said ‘Mr. Mayor whatever you do make sure the people

drive the rebuilding process.’ So I have purposely set up processes where people can tell government what they want to see and people are coming up with plans for their neighborhoods, and we in government are going to have to react to that.”

Practical Considerations

As the city evolves during this recovery and during these one hundred days the inevitability of a smaller footprint that has been talked about and a smaller and less African-American community is a possibility; long time community activist and housing expert Fred Johnson who was featured in Spike Lee's documentary ‘When the Levees Broke’ thinks blacks and poor people will have to find more creative ways to deal with living in the ‘New’ New Orleans some of which may include assistance from the government. “Understanding the dichotomy of America we know blacks make less money we may need to become creative. If the cost of living in New Orleans increases then we have to figure out how

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News Orleans Data News Weekly

TRAIL BLAZERS

By: Edwin Buggage

A Family Affair

The Amedee Family Shares Their Wisdom with the Community

By Renetta Burrell Perry

When the Wisdom Reception Center on St. Bernard Avenue opened its doors last year, it was both the culmination of seven years of hard work and the beginning of something extraordinary for the Avenue. The project is the group effort of the Amedee family, locals whose old-school upbringing and close family ties are the evident catalyst for their success today. Glenn Amedee and Annette LeDuff Amedee, General Managers/Event Planners for the Center beam with pride as they recall the unmistakable bond of the early Amedee family. "We were basically raised out of a sock drawer," says Glenn, adding that they were poor, but at the time because of the nurturing given by his parents Clarence T. and Laverna "Val" Amedee, the kids did not realize it. "You wore everybody's clothes. That taught us to share," he remembers.

Therefore, transcending their meager roots and transitioning into young entrepreneurs together seemed natural as the young Amedee brothers eventually ventured into real estate and construction, trades that were strong and successful in their family.

But as Glenn explains, they wanted more. He and his brothers were determined to make a difference in the community while at the same time bettering their own financial situations. "We were looking for an exit plan from construction," he says, adding that in earlier days, men who made their living in construction often opened bars and other businesses as supplemental income. In the Amedees' case, the notion of owning a reception/party hall was a dream of their mother who in that old New Orleans way, loved to throw down-home parties in their childhood home. "Mama loved to party," he states lovingly. However, as Annette adds, the family knew that an exit from one venture meant an entrance into another. "We knew we wanted to



exit, but we loved to work and we needed a retirement plan," she says.

After obtaining some initial funding, coupled with the fund pool created by the Amedee siblings and their spouses, the purchase of what is now The Wisdom was achieved; but that was only the beginning. Glenn reminisces about the early days with pride and gratefulness. He recalls how hard it was to accomplish what people see today as the finished product. "We have worked on this place everyday for seven years," he says, being cautious to give credit to the "40-50" men who stuck with them throughout the entire process. "They got behind the vision and got excited about it." Annette chimes in about the sacrifices that the family unit had to undergo to make their collective dream a reality. "Throughout the seven years, you sacrificed clothes, cars, etc., because you had the vision," she recounts. Glenn says that there were even times when he wondered when and if the project would ever be completed. He remembers a time when a gentleman came into the building one day as he worked and asked when the building would ever be finished. He had to delve back into his childhood and recall a quote from his father who would always

tell them, don't worry how far away the lake is, just keep walking toward and and you'll get there. This wisdom, along with the efforts of their extended family, their friends and those financial institution who granted them the funds needed to complete their dream, gave the siblings the fuel they needed to get to the finish line.

But with the work 95 percent complete, and the opening of The Wisdom clearly in sight, one more obstacle would test the Amedees' faith. Glenn remembers coming in the building and looking at the unsightly hole that would be the elevator. He says that the challenge was that even though he and his brothers were in the construction business, this was not their area of expertise, and unfortunately, there were no African-Americans locally that were experienced in this area either. With SBA and other lending institutions now shying away from the effort, and the elevator and parking facility needing to be completed, the siblings were forced to recall once again those words of wisdom from their father. That proverbial lake he spoke of seemed so close this time, but so far away. "SBA, Hibernia and Dryades, would not finance the projects," says Glenn. Ultimately their blessing came

in the form of a man named Herman Boudreaux at Gulf Coast Bank who was convinced that the Amedees' vision was one worth fulfilling. And the rest as they say, is history.

The Wisdom, now a gracious site which looms stately on a vacant, once-thriving strip, is a welcome presence to blight-weary residents who are in search of a good time. It's a blatant reminder that this community will survive. With its spacious rooms, impeccable decor, ample parking facilities and traditional New Orleans cuisine, The Wisdom is bringing back the neighborhood and in grand style. Glenn and Annette are proud of their state-of-the-art facility which has so much to offer our citizens. "We want to get the Avenue back," says Glenn, who along with Annette and the rest of the family, has a plan to help attract minority business owners to the area. He is in the process of seeking ways to help get funding for these ventures. He says he believes that if other minority groups can own areas of the city, so can we. The Amedees have a clear vision for the Avenue - they'd like to see African-American businesses, including theirs, thrive there. They believe that this is what it will take to turn our situation of poverty, joblessness, crime and the like completely around. He and Annette quickly dismiss the myth that African-Americans can't stick together and accomplish great things. They say that their family is proof that our families have what it takes to achieve success in business - together. Annette goes further as she brings up a question that she hears too often. "People ask 'why did you put this building here?' But we ask, why can't we have a nice building here?" It is that commitment to the area that drives the Amedee family to make a difference. Post Katrina, they utilize the strength of their family and friends to clean the neighborhood from Claiborne down Rampart to St. Claude and around The Wisdom on St. Bernard. They have

Trailblazer, continued on page 15.

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NEWSMAKER

Dr. Beverly Wright honored with Robert Wood Johnson Leadership Award



Dr. Beverly Wright

Shortly before Hurricane Katrina, Beverly Wright's mother and only brother died. During the storm, her home and office were destroyed. And afterwards, she could not find her uncle, who

suffered from heart disease, for three weeks. But Wright, who serves as the executive director of the New Orleans-based Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Dillard University, looked beyond her personal tragedy and loss, and focused instead on the environmental health issues facing the most vulnerable people in New Orleans.

Because of her health environmental work on behalf of displaced residents, Wright has been chosen as one of five recipients of the Special Gulf Coast Award for outstanding leadership in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina by the Robert Wood Johnson Community Health Leadership Program (CHLP).

There was much work to be

done. In its wake, the storm left severe environmental problems such as huge amounts of mold, debris, and contaminated soil in low-lying areas, inhabited mostly by minority and low-income people. Everyone was vulnerable. Wright set up a temporary office in Atlanta a week after Katrina hit and kept in contact with her staff, who was scattered in several southern cities. She put together a team of specialists whose expertise she could tap. She organized workshops for and distributed fact sheets to evacuees to provide them with important information on how to protect themselves from indoor air pollution and outside contamination. She spoke out in the media and testified at congressional and other hearings

on the massive environmental damage caused by the storm. She questioned the methods and pace of debris removal by both the EPA and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. She challenged state and federal officials to address long-term pre-existing environmental health problems in some New Orleans neighborhoods.

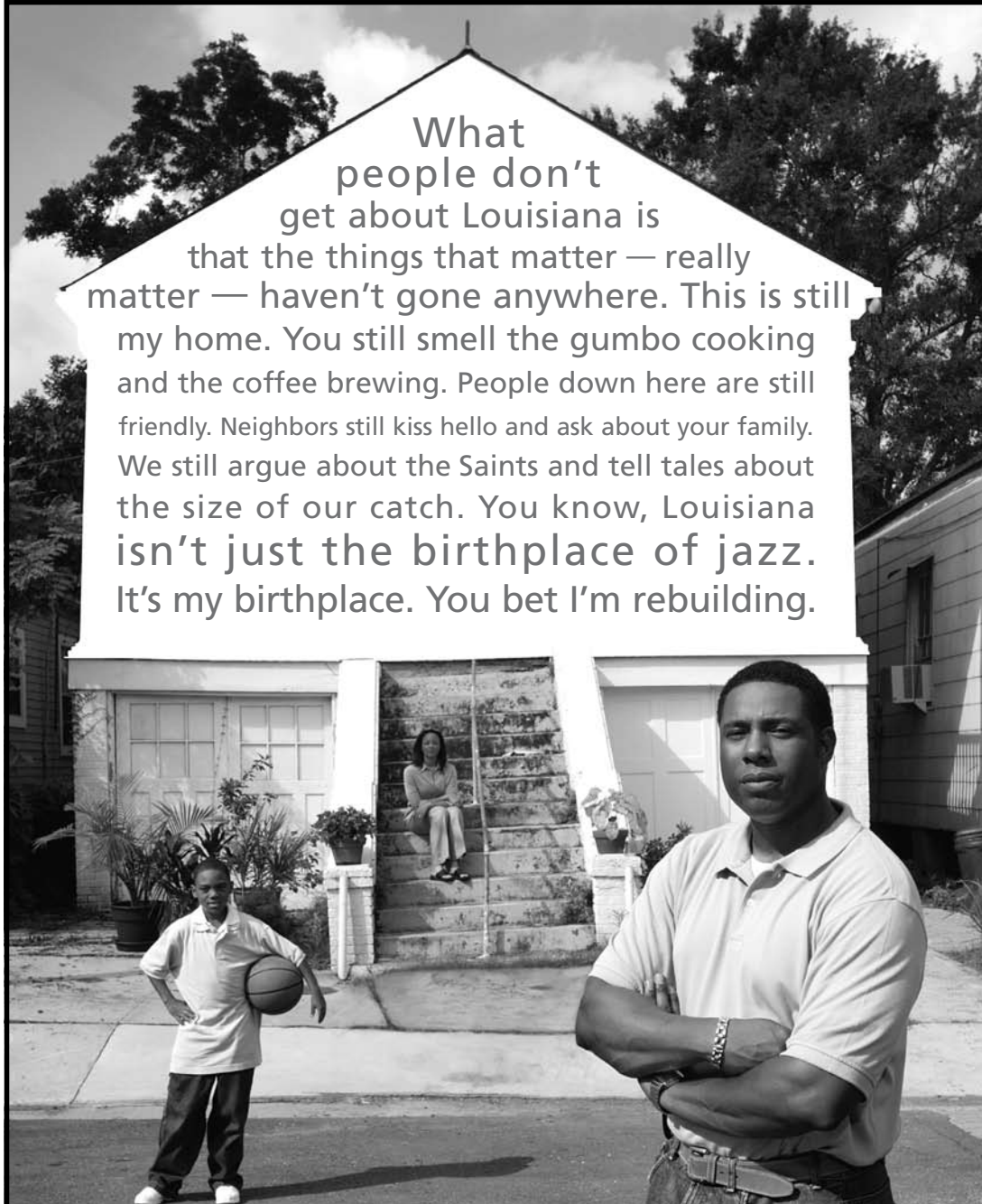
In early 2006 she initiated a project that involved collaboration with the United Steel Workers Union as well as with volunteer, faith-based, and neighborhood organizations. It was a pilot clean-up effort on Aberdeen Road in New Orleans East. More than 180 volunteers showed up for training and work. Tainted soil was removed from each yard and

replaced with new topsoil and sod and contaminated dirt was safely removed as part of the "A Safe Way Back Home" project. The result? A cleaner street, a return of residents, and a slew of requests from other communities for a similar program.

"In our city, Dr. Wright is known as the 'can do' kid, as her work reflects her tenacity for justice and vision for change," said Dr. Kevin U. Stephens, director of health for the New Orleans Health Department. "She has made a difference in our community and because of her, many more will return home."


Wright and the four other winners will be honored on October 12 at CHLP's annual meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona.

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Homeowners affected by Hurricane Rita or Katrina may be eligible to receive up to \$150,000 in compensation for their losses to get them back into their homes. *The Road Home* Housing Assistance Centers are open and applications are currently being processed. If you have already registered, you will receive an application packet in the mail. To start your application for Governor Blanco's *Road Home* program, visit www.road2LA.org or call 1-888-ROAD-2-LA (1-888-762-3252).



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STATE & LOCAL NEWS

City Committed to Reaching Southern Regional Salary Average

Firefighter Longevity Top Priority

NEW ORLEANS, LA - On Monday September 18, The City of New Orleans received a unanimous vote from the Civil Service Commission in support of the 10% across the board salary increase for city employees effective November 1, 2006 with continued implementation of firefighter longevity increases.

Mayor Nagin and his administration remain committed to meeting the firefighter judgment of February 28, 2003, mandated by the Civil District Court.

Since 1990, the City of New Orleans has made it a priority to increase the salaries of

all employees, including fire personnel.

* During the years of 1990 - January 2000, fire commissioned personnel

received a total of 17.5% pay increase.

* June - August 2000, fire commissioned personnel received at least a 5% increase and up to a 12.5% hiring rate increase.

* In 2002, the department received the first 2% fire longevity implemented retroactively for fire personnel with 3 to 23 years of service.

* From the years of 2003-2006, the fire department received the second, third, fourth, and fifth

installment of the 2% fire longevity payment for fire personnel with 3 to 23 years of service for those respective periods.

Although firefighters with less than three years' seniority are not covered by the state-mandated longevity raises, Dr. Hatfield assures that the administration will work with the Civil Service Commission and the City Council to allow firefighters at levels 1-7 to receive a pay benefit also.

"During the course of this administration, we are committed to raising all salaries to a level commensurate with the southern regional average,"

Hatfield said.

The City Of New Orleans Announces The Availability Of \$10m To Community Based And Not-for-profit Housing, Community Development Organizations

Neighborhood 1 is Opening the 2007 Registry/ SuperNOFA (Notice of Funding Availability) Application Process

NEW ORLEANS, LA - The City of New Orleans, through Neighborhood 1, is opening the 2007 SuperNOFA (Notice of Funding Availability) application process and the availability of approximately \$10,000,000 for community-based and not-for-profit organizations that implement programs and projects addressing priority housing, community development, and continuum of care needs. Organizations are eligible to receive funding under this NOFA only if they are certified on the Neighborhood 1 Registry of Neighborhood Organizations.

Application packets are available for downloading in MS Word format, beginning Monday, September 18, 2006 on the Neighborhood 1 website:

www.cityofno.com/portals/portal49/portal.aspx click on "Resource Center".

Registry and NOFA applications are also available from Neighborhood 1 at 1340 Poydras Street, 10th Floor beginning Monday, September 18,

Rainbow PUSH Community Meeting Announcement

The Rainbow Push Coalition - New Orleans Chapter will host their monthly meeting, Tuesday, October 3, 2006 at 6 p.m. at New Hope Baptist Church, 1807 LaSalle Street. The meeting is open to the public. For more information, call (504) 529-4223.

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NATIONAL NEWS

Citing Health Concerns, Farrakhan turns over Control of NOI to Administrative Body

By. George E. Curry
NNPA Editor-in-Chief

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Likening his predicament to that of Cuba's Fidel Castro, Minister Louis Farrakhan says he is facing some serious health challenges, causing him to turn over administration of the Nation of Islam to its executive board and cancel all appointments and personal appearances until further notice.

Farrakhan said his illness is related to the heavy dosage of radiation he received as a result of having prostate cancer in the late 1990s. He underwent surgery in November 2000 at Howard University and on a recent visit there was found to have an infection and inflammation.

"I have been suffering from the after-effects of an extremely high dose of radiated seed implantation that indeed killed the cancer cells that had broken the prostate capsule, but over time, these seeds have done severe internal damage," he explained.

Farrakhan said his illness represents "a period of testing" for his organization.

"In this period of testing, you can prove to the world that the Nation of Islam is more than the charisma, eloquence and personality of Louis Farrakhan," he said in a letter to his supporters. "In this period of testing, you can prove that the Nation of Islam is under-girded by an Idea that represents the Kingdom of God on Earth, an Idea that can never be uprooted, never be destroyed and can only increase its power, effect and influence over the hearts and minds of the people of the Earth."

During this period of recovery and testing, Farrakhan said, "I will be available to give guidance in any major situation that may arise, but I would prefer that the Executive Board of the Nation of Islam help solve the problems of the Nation, without asking me."

The Nation of Islam leader is recovering on his large farm in Michigan.

In his letter, Farrakhan said: "Commandante Fidel Castro had a very serious operation and he relinquished power to his brother and all those who were trained to



The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan

carry on in his absence. While many rejoiced – believing and thinking that, if Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution expired, they could move Cuba and the Revolution in a new direction – his absence from the helm only proved that Cuba will not fall apart over the absence or passing of their illustrious leader. Such a challenge is before us."

Ironically, it was on a trip to Cuba in March that Farrakhan's current illness was diagnosed. Upset by the slow response to Hurricane Katrina, Minister Farrakhan led a 23-member delegation on a 9-day fact-finding mission to learn how Cuba prepared for and reacted to natural disasters.

"On my trip to Cuba to learn disaster management preparedness, I spent most of my time there being examined and tested by some of the finest doctors in Cuba," Farrakhan said. "They discovered an ulcer in the anal area, similar to the ulcer that I had in 1998-1999 that almost caused the loss of my life."

"The doctors in Cuba felt that my health at that time was near perfect, except for that ulcer; but from that time, March 2006, I have been steadily fighting serious pain and infection. In the last month, I had lost nearly 15 lbs. And over the last six weeks, I have lost over 20 lbs."

Upon being examined at Howard University Hospital, Farrakhan said it was discovered that he was dehydrated, anemic, low in protein, albumen and iron.

"Although I have some of the finest cooks who always prepare the finest meals for me, I was in a seriously nutritionally depleted state, because the pain that I was in took away my appetite," Farrakhan

Black Children are Equal with other children in Vaccination Rates

By. Lorinda M. Bullock
NNPA National Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – For the first time in 10 years, children of all races are equally getting the necessary series of vaccinations, says a survey released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"It is somewhat encouraging that our rates of vaccination are increasing even though we are in the midst of a number of factors including uninsured children that would make you think that the



rates would remain stable or decrease," said Dr. Albert Morris, president of the National Medical Association, a professional organization of more than 30,000 African-American physicians.

According to the CDC, that used a random national telephone survey in 77 survey areas, the immunization coverage rates were 80 percent for children of multiple

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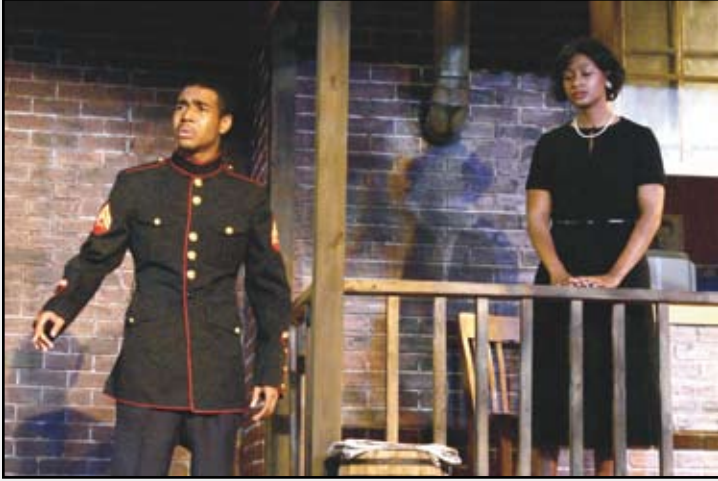
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DATA ZONE

A Journey into the Soul

ABCT Presents August Wilson's *Fences*

Story and Photos by: Glenn Summers



The Anthony Bean Community Theater has positioned itself as one of the premiere theater companies in the city of New Orleans. With its latest production 'Fences' a play by the late Pulitzer Prize Winning playwright August Wilson; Bean's company has shown it has what it takes to put on a major production and present it with breadth and depth. The production and performances were compelling and captivating. Wilbert Williams gave a stunning performance as the conflicted lead character Troy Maxson (a role made famous by James Earl Jones in the original production) a former Negro League Baseball player who found his dream of playing in the major leagues deferred and having to settle for a life as a sanitation worker; a fate which leads him into a tortuous existence where he struggles with self-pity, lust, rage, and a pre-occupation with death.

The play centers around him and his family and how his self-deprecating attitude has led him into a life filled with despair, desperation and hopelessness and how it affects his life and those around him. In one instance he tries to protect his son from a life of disappointment and unfulfilled dreams and discourages his youngest son Cory (Darryl Lutch) and Stephen Edmond (alternate) who has been recruited by a college to play football and to think about a more practical career. Although he may see this as an act of love shielding his son from the societal slights that's the source of his bitterness; in his son's eyes Troy is an oppressive, contemptible figure who doesn't have the capacity for love or compassion. Throughout the play they have a contentious relationship that leads to a showdown where the bond between father and son has ripped causing resentment and irreparable damage.

Gwendolyn Foxworth and Danielle Tipton (alternate) both gave amazing performances as the Rose the faithful, caring wife of Troy Maxson who served as his rock and source of protection from a world where he felt emasculated and where in his mind his race stood in the way of him reaching his full potential. The talented and charismatic

Kenneth Brown Jr. played the role of Lyons the older son of Troy Maxson. He like his father and brother was a dreamer, but his life as a free spirited musician was getting him nowhere fast. His character embodied a zest for life and experiencing it fully through creative expression was his main concern much to the chagrin of his father. To Lyons the mundane practical everyday grind of surviving seemed a fate worse than death. In his mind's eye he witnessed first hand the slow spiritual death conformity brings as it was this that sapped the joy from the life of his father who insists he become more responsible continuously stressing the importance of sacrificing oneself for his family.

Harold X Evans played Jim Bono the best friend of Troy who is his moral compass as his life spins out of control into infidelity, and neglecting the one thing that keeps his life focused and centered; Rose his ever faithful wife. Anthony Bean gave an exceptional performance as Gabriel, Troy's brother who as a result of fighting in World War II has a metal plate placed inside his head leaving him in what some would consider a demented state. But his name as his appearance serves as a metaphor, for he carries a trumpet ready to blow like the biblical Gabriel did to open the gates of heaven for St. Peter on Judgment Day. But contrary to what many perceive as nonsensical; in his childlike infantile prattle he is actually wise, and full of insight. Throughout the play he proclaims his brother Troy who is obsessed with death is going to heaven. In a small role the adorable and precocious young actress Dacia Bell plays Raynell the lovechild of Troy Maxson giving an excellent performance.

Bean and company has shown in this production that it has the all the elements of putting on a first rate presentation that explores complex material in a way that's convincing, compelling and captivating. And while *Fences* lead character Troy Maxson struggled because he did not make the big leagues; conversely, Anthony Bean's latest productions shows that he has what it takes to play with the majors.

I201



a lavender and grey shotgun,
trimmed and eight-foot fenced
in sherwin williams' caribbean blue,
resides at the corner of ursulines
and st. claude; inside is high and wide;
when stepping thru the threshold
there is a lull between realities as
you are shelled of your outside self;
whoever you have to be in the streets to survive
stays on the porch
where a sun-bleached red chair sits,
a place of rest for personas;
the rest of you enters into a space
of unfolding where beauty is pursued
forcefully and gloom is not withstood
for it is overstood, mood is matter;
its crafters were careful to fashion
doorways tall enough to welcome giant spirits

its dwellers were devoted to keeping them there;
for beside sidewalks crammed with banana trees
honeysuckle and sunflowers, fig trees, lime trees
mint, gardenia, and night-blooming jasmine bushes,
run streets lush with blood—guts and tyranny
the city signs say tremé
but the "banquet" defies, cries LIBERTY;
children feed equally on the fruits
of "mispaleaf" and mis-belief;
misery often overflowing into households
and in the flood zone, sometimes
it never stops rising;
so every sunday for two seasons
the village communes to beat it
stomp it dance it jump it sing it
moan it chant it shout it drum it
sousaphone trombone trumpet it
back into the ruts, furrows, and potholes

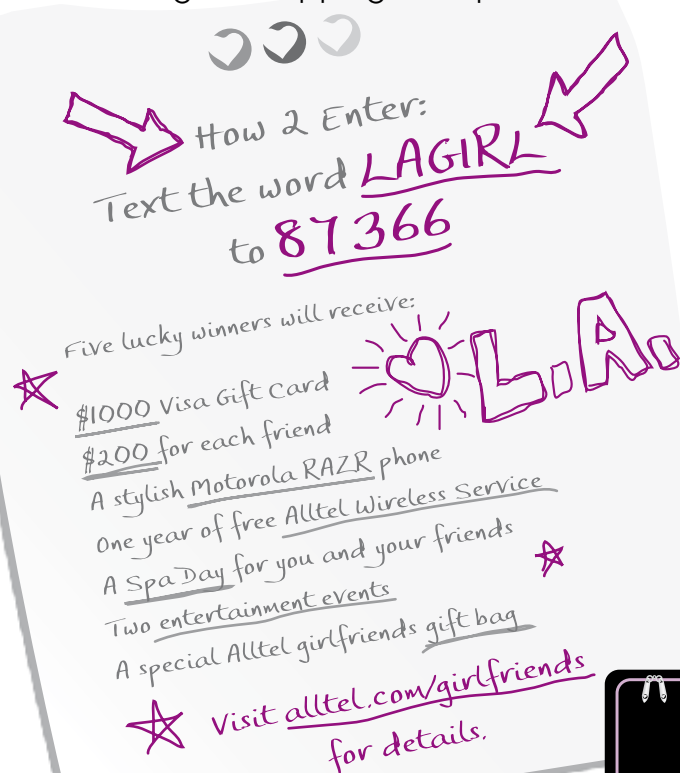
left by dragging tour busses and racing patrol cars;
and at our address
we paint red, yellow, turquoise, and orange walls
we hang paintings, posters, pictures of indian suits, and instruments
we cook fried fish, jambalaya, yat-ka-mein, and cowain
we play jazz, gospel, reggae, hip-hop, and spades
we make groceries, furniture, families, and sense
we make music, clothes, businesses, and arguments
we make drinks, rent, festivals, and clubs,
we make jewelry, grass roots institutes, poems, and love;
and regardless of who is sitting
on the sofa in the front room, be it
pusher, politician, pastor, or policeman—
or any of the good or bad people they oppress—
all can converse soul to soul.
we make friends with neighbors
we make home.

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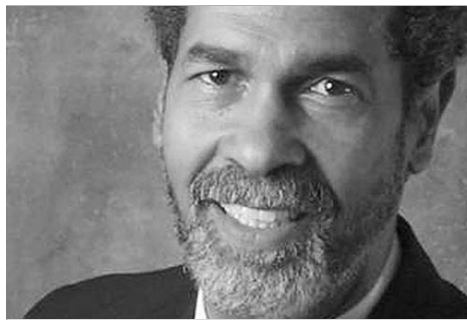
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Harrah's
NEW ORLEANS
CASINO & HOTEL

OPINION

A New and Improved New Orleans



The Love Dr.
Data Columnist

One of the main reasons that you and I must support African American owned media is because our motives and perspectives are different. Take, for instance, the “planning” of the “new and improved” New Orleans.

Those who owned the high ground were immediately in a mode to eliminate city services and infrastructure responsibilities for the low ground, land settled when blacks finally were able to buy land, empowered by employment possibilities created by the civil rights movement.

Evil is generally justified and popularized by expedience. Evil is always done in the name of achieving a popularized goal. Such was the proposed disenfranchisement of a hundred thousand citizens who are constitutionally entitled to equal protection under the law. They had abided by the same building codes, had acquired all the proper permits, clearances and inspections and had paid the same taxes as other citizens, but to save themselves, half the citizens decided that it was ok to turn others’ into spillways or other “green space”.

When developers were allowed to create neighborhoods, and commit peoples’ lifetimes of asset building, elected officials and city government committed city services, because all legal requirements had been met. The lifestyles of the people of New Orleans East and Lover Ninth Ward were to be sacrificed for Uptown and Algiers. Those who got back first tried to cut of services for those who had lost the most. If that is not evil, what is?

Here is a perspective difference for you. To most working class people, saving New Orleans is about food, music, historical landscape, family closeness and other aspects of culture. To the rich people, saving New Orleans is about saving their wealth, and their lifestyle. The parable is true, evil loves to hang out with wealth and power, probably because bad things you and I might think about doing, rich folk can carry off. The richer you are the more effective and efficient you can be at

wreaking pain and misery on others.

To some folk getting the superdome fixed was much more important than getting folk back in their homes. But watch what happens when a superdome full of people can’t get waited on anyplace downtown because the working poor are locked out. I’m writing this right before the Atlanta Monday night game and I hope that I’m wrong, but who’s going to sell the beer, and serve in the suites, or cook the food?

The other media will never give credit (in a positive way) to a couple of Black men who in the face of mounting pressure took courageous stands based on what was right, not expedient. I would never argue that it would be easier and quicker to rebuild only half of the city. It’s a “no brainer”, but as evil as it gets, and comes from a place wherein saving mine is worth discarding yours. Its about the right to live in New Orleans, but again, the lust and drunkenness of wealth has a way of devaluing anything that gets in its way and the miserable meaningless lives of the poor and working and professional black people of the low lands were certainly in the way.

But like I declared, two black men stood up and nipped that crap in the bud. Dan Packer of Entergy didn’t hesitate to declare that Entergy New Orleans was committed to restore service to all their customers. Next, Mayor Nagin refused to follow the recommendation that there be a moratorium on building permits, until there was a plan. It pains me deeply to see what it cost these men to make these decisions, and the way many of us allow media to vilify them in our minds and nasty mouths. Much of the local media is controlled by the very same folk who wanted a smaller “footprint”, one that didn’t include most of us.

So that’s what all the dogging out of Ray and Entergy may be about, Black men who dared to stand in the way of our sacrifice for the “greater good”. How can half the people be for the greater good? So two brothers have slain the dragon, and no pat on the back or nothing, just cheap shots and media lynching. We say we want leaders who speak truth to power, and then we say, “he ought to try to get along with those people. I’m sure that the Mayor has learned that the only thing that works is calling folk out. In his mind, I’m sure he ponders that if he had cussed out the President a day sooner people may not have suffered as long, because being patient didn’t seem to make a damned thing happen.

Another thing, we can’t get caught up in that “things ought to be” mindset. I’ve begun to challenge people, What’s your frame of reference? Haven’t we heard that nothing has ever happened like this? My

Letters, continued on next page.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

In our rebuilding efforts, it would be wise and most beneficial to have, among other considerations, some guiding principles foremost in mind. I would like to offer four and the reasons for each.

1. “Begin with End in Mind” (Stephen R. Covey);
2. “As for rebuilding the shattered metropolis the goals should not be just recovery but transformation. A reconstruction that leaves the region not just like it was but better” (The Brookings Institution);
3. “If we had a few thinkers we could expect great achievements on tomorrow” (Carter G. Woodson); and
4. “Be Proactive/Become an Agent of Change” (Stephen R. Covey); “in his present plight, however, does not see possibilities until it is too late”/He exercises much “hindsight, and for that reason he loses ground in the hotly contested battles of life” (Carter G. Woodson).

The principles are suggested because they could be useful in transforming some of the most intractable problems in New Orleans, poverty, voluntary (resulting from a person’s idleness, choice, or fickleness) and involuntary (when someone works and plays by rule and still poor) and the shameful underutilization of female and minority businesses in both public and private sectors. Allow me to explain. Prior to Katrina and historically, minority and female owned businesses have been demonstratively underutilized in both public and private sectors in New Orleans and in other parts of Louisiana. (City government purchasing from minority and female businesses in the last two years has witnessed a moderate improvement.) Instructive, here are the findings on underutilization of female and minority vendors by the state in a recent review by Total Community Action, Inc. (TCA) of the Department of Natural Resources which shows that of the \$32,995,626 purchased in goods and services, in fiscal year 2004, \$663,770 was from minority and female vendors. Stated another way, for every \$1,000 spent by the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources for goods and services \$20.11 goes to minority and female businesses or for every \$100 spent by one of the departments \$2.01 is payable to minority and female businesses. Unfortunately, these same findings can be generalized to the other 6 departments of Louisiana State government save the Louisiana Department of Transportation which has a better track record, largely due to imposed federal mandates, however, it is still a large cry from an adequate record. Assuming this practice is carried over to our recovery efforts and assuming a \$60,000,000,000 infusion for construction projects or more as projected by think-tanks, universities, and informed financial

observers, in the New Orleans economy that would mean for every \$1,000,000 spent \$20,115 will be payable to minority and female vendors and for every \$500,000 spent, \$10,058 is payable to minority and female businesses.

In the private sector, the purchasing of goods and services from minorities and females, other than by individual families, is believed to be less (see Discrimination in New Orleans by National Economic Research Associates, Inc. for Harrah’s Jazz Company, 1994). This pattern holds true in major industries such as construction and services, where there are available minority and female vendors, as well as other industries, such as commodities, where there is little availability of minority and female vendors, save Asians.

Manifestly, this practice alienates citizens, seeds apathy and lessen the competitiveness of city and state, as well, contributes to the extent and debilitating effects of poverty, i.e. low educational attainment; tax base insufficient to support necessary institutions; high crime rates; high incidence of uninsured persons; high incidence of teen pregnancy; over crowded jails; low labor force participation; and high unemployment and underemployment.

Thus, the end in mind here is to change these practices. Changing this means make different now as oppose to employing an incremental approach whereby these practices will change over next two or five or ten years. Rather, the end is complete transformation without exception. Waiting must be treated as the quintessence of all insults and to be asked to wait for tomorrow/next year/next decade to be treated as an equal or the way others have been dealt with since their birth is totally unthinkable. The young people got this one right, change these practices now or yesterday or even better, day before yesterday.

To make this transformation, I believe, will require what Carter G. Woodson described in 1933 as a thinker and what Stephen R. Covey’s writing, 10 years ago, discusses as a change agent. In Woodson’s work, which every lover of freedom and student of complete transformation should read and reread, he imputes the plight of the less than fortunate people, in parts, (yes there is voluntary poverty) to those of us who try to lead without equipping ourselves to problem solve/triangulate. This would mean, assuming one has good intentions and is fair, that those of us who accept and/or opt for a role of leadership should be able to sit across the table with people of disparate interest and 1) identify a problem; 2) offer solutions and select among options; 3) weigh the value of each option offered; 4) choose the most appropriate option to include ways to monitor, evaluate, and tweak effort to ensure getting the end in mind, and 5) most importantly, effectively horse trade for the good of all. Anything

Letters, continued on next page.

OPINION

Pipeline to the People

Data News Weekly asked New Orleanians on the street their thoughts on the status of the Nagin Administration following it's first 100 days. Here are some of the responses we received.

Patricia Jordan, native from New Orleans East.

In my area, it's going along pretty well. People are coming back and cleaning out their houses, putting the debris out and it's being picked up. That's in the Huntington Park area. But I own a house in the upper Ninth Ward and the debris pick up is not good. I call it 'The Forgotten Neighborhood'. But other areas, the stores are coming back. It's a process – it's gonna take time.

Marvin Cousin, native New Orleanian from the 7th Ward

It's going pretty slow. I'm still sitting in a trailer, but I can't stay in a trailer. I didn't have any insurance and I sent in my paperwork to The Road Home (program), but I haven't heard anything. They keep saying it's gonna pick up but people are still waiting on the recovery, waiting on The Road Home.

George Campfield, 58 year old native New Orleanian, retired resident of Bywater.

I just returned to New Orleans from Arkansas. Nagin ain't doing nothing. It's really sad. If I knew he wasn't gonna do anything for his people, I never would have voted for him. I thought, since he was in office before the storm, he'd be the one to turn it around. I'm sorry I even voted for him. The people in the Ninth Ward protesting for water - after all this time and they don't even have water? And all this debris... We got a mayor just forgot about his people. The Governor don't care nothing about people down here. All they're worried about is getting big business to come down here. I want to move back. It's where I'm from. But it's too depressing to be here.

Dorothy Lofton, 82 year old native of Tremé, now in Mid City.

I think (the recovery) is pretty good, considering what has to be done. I'm not complaining 'cause I tried to do one house and just got that one back up. I've been back since October and it took me till March to find a place to live.

Love Dr., continued from page 10.

personal experiences since Katrina is of a whole lot of people busting their butts, and trying to do it right, but learning as they go. Most of the people working for FEMA never did this stuff before. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying sit back and don't press, but press with the clear acceptance and understanding that its going to be a while, so getting frustrated is counterproductive, stressful and unpleasant, and we already have enough stress and unpleasantness in our lives.

This is not a time to wait for leaders, because even the best are simply men or women. We are blessed that landowners among us have our right to return and resettle in our neighborhoods.

Now we must help one another. Help a neighbor and turn what would otherwise have been wasted time into a community asset. How can an overgrown house between two that are cut exist? Don't wait for others, be a leader, and stop crying about leadership. In this way, when we emerge from this experience, we will be stronger and more connected to our neighbors, and that's an essential ingredient in any recipe for a "new and improved" New Orleans.

Got
something
on your
mind?
Send your
letter to
the editor

**datanewseditor
@bellsouth.net**

Letters, continued from previous page.

short of this, Woodson would say, we lose ground, particularly in hotly contested battles as will be the case in purchasing goods and services for the recovery effort in New Orleans.

Ladies and gentlemen, the purchasing pattern for the \$60,000,000,000 projected to be spent in construction over the coming years, not to mention spending in other industries, will exponentially be no different than pre-Katrina practices unless we have thinkers 24 hours and 7 days a week. Moving forward without thinkers will be tantamount to giving fresh legs to business as usual which has been abundant of good intentions and contributed to involuntary poverty and its debilitating effects.

The luminously sensible Stephen R. Covey's change agent, i.e. someone or institution that engages and/or causes behavioral changes in social, cultural, or economic practices, seems to be well suited for better ensuring that our reconstruction efforts leave the region not just like it was but better, as counseled by The Brookings Institution. Perhaps the Louisiana legislature and the Governor were assuming the role of change agents in the 2005 Regular Session with the enactment of the Hudson Initiative which is aimed at increasing utilization of Small Entrepreneurships. Specifically, the act provides for certain source selection criteria, contract requirements, and goals with respect to utilization of small entrepreneurships in certain procurement and public contracts; to provide for responsibilities of the commissioner of administration and state agencies with

respect to the initiative; to provide for eligibility requirements for participation in the initiative; to provide for certification of certain businesses; to provide for reporting; to provide for rulemaking; and to provide for related matters.

Even though the legislature and the Governor acted as change agents by enacting the law, it has not yielded any results to date. More tellingly, with the exception of Department of Transportation, neither of the remaining six departments or Division of Administration has:

- 1) set up ways to implement the policy;
- 2) maintained data that allows for tracking and evaluating the policy; and
- 3) announced a date the departments will start either of the above.

Maybe this happened because our end in mind did not include follow up, monitoring, evaluation, and tweaking of agreements (policy). This is particularly needed when the end in mind is economic parity. Ladies and gentlemen, 2 percent out of every purchase of goods and services from female and minority vendors by our State, without exception, is a most compelling reason for immediate change. So much so, the need warrants everyone and all institutions becoming change agents.

This can be done without being an ideologue. As matter of fact, it can be done by simply making neutral information available to citizen-at-large, regularly. This would be tantamount to Dr. James Bobo's admonishment to media 31 years ago when he impressively stated:

"I suggest further that the news media

are culpable, because they lack competent business and economic analysts—they have not assigned staff to the economy on a continuing basis so that they could develop the competence to understand and interpret what they see, hear, and are told, nor have they regarded the local economy and economic conditions on a par with sports and politics. The media, as a consequence, are not infrequently a victim of their sources, and hence they frequently—too frequently—serve as an uncritical vehicle for public relations and vested interest statements thinly disguised as economic understanding. They lack a comprehensive and systematic method of covering and reporting the economic and economic trends and condition; they uncritically publish economic nonsense; and as a consequence, the media abet the perpetuation of pure economic nonsense and not infrequently attribute it to "economists," who all too frequently are never identified."

To be fair, much has improved since Dr. Bobo wrote this insightful piece. The improvement, however, doesn't include regular accounts of our economy such as the following twelve frequent and recurring topics that are given coverage, even though the coverage is not didactic and abundant of good intentions, 1) agenda of Democratic or Republican party; 2) expected indictments; 3) percentage of unwed mothers; 4) advantage /disadvantage of having Saints and/or Hornets in New Orleans; 5) political difference between local, state, and federal governments; 6) uncritical view of the BESSE Board; 7) diatribes on local school

board; 8) affirmative action; 9) perceived incompetence of elected officials in New Orleans without juxtaposing their abilities with officials in other parishes; 10) murder rate; 11) perception of business climate in New Orleans; and 12) corruption. Arguably, the need to educate our citizens about the New Orleans' economy regularly is equal to or greater than any of the twelve recurring topics covered by our media. Equally, it is conceivable that the value of regular coverage that informs citizens on the economy could add more value than the twelve topics combined.

Believers in transformation and those who feel there is a need for transformation, I suggest that without a strong commitment and plan to drastically increase the utilization of female and minority services, the projected billion of dollars earmarked for recovery are likely to accrue to the regulars and outside contractors and imported workers. Deductably, there will be no change and surely no transformation in New Orleans. Thus, our end in mind must be the converse of business as usual. It must include seeing the possibilities of a reconstruction effort that leaves involuntary poverty behind and establishment of one of the major missing links in New Orleans, an economic middle class. We cannot get there spending \$2.01 out of \$100.00 with female and minority vendors. To accomplish this all of us must be proactive, push for transformation, and be thinkers. This ladies and gentlemen, must be our end in mind regardless of what our leadership does or does not do.

HEALTH NEWS

Prostate Cancer Awareness



Larry Lucas
Data Columnist

Sometimes, ignorance is bliss – like when it comes to your mother-in-law's "secret recipe." But not when we're talking about your health. As a nine-year survivor of prostate cancer, I'm here to tell you that when it comes to the health of your prostate, ignorance can be life threatening.

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness month and according to the National Cancer Institute, prostate cancer is the second most common type of cancer among men in this country. Only skin cancer is more common. Out of every three men who are diagnosed with cancer each year, one is diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Prostate health is particularly important for African-American men. Death rates for this cancer are nearly two-and-a-half times higher in African-American men than white men, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), making this disease the most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death in black men.

Why is this? One reason suggested by the American Cancer Society is African-Americans are more likely to be diagnosed later, with more advanced cancer, which is harder to treat and is often more lethal. That's why it is so important to get tested regularly – through regular visits to your doctor. These screening tests can find cancer early when it's most treatable.

Lots of people – especially us men – would rather take comfort in the fact that they "feel fine" than subject themselves to an annual physical. But it's that annual physical that saved my life; I had no symptoms and was enjoying activities like golf with no problem. Through prostate screening tests that are a part of my regular physicals, I was fortunate enough to catch the cancer in the early stages, before it had spread to lymph nodes or other vital organs.

There are two main screening tests doctors use to detect prostate cancer: digital rectal examination (DRE) and a blood test called the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test. Now, I know these screening tests don't sound like a day at the park. But your doctor is there to help make them as quick, painless and worry-free as possible. In fact, the DRE exam takes less time than you'll spend reading this sentence.

The American Cancer Society recommends that both the PSA and DRE should be offered annually, beginning at age 50, to men who have at least a 10-year life expectancy. Men at high risk, such as

African Americans and those with a strong family history of prostate cancer, should begin testing at age 45.

In a recent interview with ABC News, Dr. Isamettin Aral of Staten Island University Hospital said, "I think it is important to share with the patient what you're finding in the examination. And also important is just because there is a lump or a swelling, it doesn't mean...[that] there is a tumor in the prostate. It just means we are going to have to do a little more specific testing, probably a biopsy."

What happens if a biopsy reveals that you have prostate cancer? In general, the earlier the cancer is detected, the more likely it is that you'll remain disease-free. Because approximately 90 percent of all prostate cancers are detected in the early stages, the cure rate is very high – nearly 100 percent of men diagnosed at this stage will be disease-free after five years, according to the Prostate Cancer Foundation. This is particularly remarkable when you consider that in the 1970s only 67 percent of men diagnosed with local or regional prostate cancer were disease-free after five years.

Before you begin any course of treatment, there are some questions the National Cancer Institute suggests you ask your doctor:

- What is the stage of the disease? Do any lymph nodes show signs of cancer? Has the cancer spread?
- What is the grade of the tumor?
- What is the goal of treatment? What are my treatment choices? Which do you recommend for me? Why?
- What are the expected risks and benefits of each kind of treatment?
- How will treatment affect my normal activities?
- Would a clinical trial (research study) be appropriate for me?

As a prostate cancer survivor, one of the most common questions I get from others experiencing the disease in their own lives is about the side effects of some treatments – specifically, how it might affect their sex lives. You must remember: you have to be alive to have a love life! It's important to follow the course of treatment your doctor recommends given your overall health, stage of cancer and other unique factors.

More than ever before, medicines offer hope to those battling prostate cancer. A new PhRMA report shows today there are 113 medicines in development to treat prostate cancer according to ADIS R&D Insight. Several vaccines that attempt to get the body's own immune system to fight the cancer are currently being studied as treatments for prostate cancer. One potential vaccine has tripled the survival rate of men with advanced prostate cancer in clinical trials.

The Prostate Cancer Foundation reports that one new case of prostate cancer occurs every 2.25 minutes and a man dies from it every 19 minutes. Help ensure you don't become a statistic by knowing the status of your prostate health. In certain instances, ignorance is bliss; in this case, knowledge is power.

DOLLARS & SENSE

Your Age and Your Finances

At different stages of life, different financial issues may be most important.



Donald Smith
Data Columnist

"GE-35655 (04/06) (Exp. 04/08)"

Managing your finances is a lifelong process. It usually begins with savings—ideally as a child. Once you have a regular income of your own and have started saving on a regular basis, you'll have to decide how to invest the money you are saving.

Investors in their twenties are often advised to put more of their savings in investments that have potential to grow. Even though these investments may carry more risk of loss, a younger person has time to potentially make up any losses they may experience early on. Conversely, those who are investing for more immediate goals are often advised to put more of their savings in fixed income investments. These may not grow as fast but are less likely to lose money.

Strategies For Common Life Events

Everyone lives their lives differently, and everyone has complicated emotions about money, so investment decisions are highly personal and unique to each individual. Nonetheless, throughout their lives, most investors face some similar situations. Where are you in the cycle? The following are examples of common life events and some things you might consider when making investment decisions.

Your first full-time job

- Start a savings account to build a cash reserve.

- Start a retirement fund and make regular monthly contributions, no matter how small.

Marriage

- Examine your joint investment contributions and allocations, taking into account your combined income and expenses.
- Consider opening a short-term investment account specifically to help fund your down payment on your home and pay closing and moving costs.

Children

- If you don't yet have life insurance, now's the time.
- Start a college savings fund.

New job

- Review your investment strategy and asset allocation to accommodate a new salary and a different benefits package.
- Consider rolling over your previous company's 401(k) plan into your new employer's plan or a Rollover IRA.

Within 10 years of retirement

- Review your retirement fund asset allocation to accommodate the shorter time frame for your investments.
 - Increase savings for retirement.
- Retirement
- Study your distribution options to maximize assets and tax benefits.
 - Reallocate your investments to provide the income you need while still potentially offering some growth in capital to help beat inflation and fund your later years.

For more help at every stage of your financial life cycle, talk to your financial professional.

AXA Advisors, LLC does not provide legal or tax advice. Please consult your tax or legal advisor regarding your individual situation.

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COMMENTARY

American Leaders Need to Address Poverty



Marc Morial
NNPA Columnist

African-Americans, 24.7 percent of whom lived in poverty in 2005, compared to 22.5 percent in 2000. Nearly one in three Black children under 18 years of age is poor, compared to 18.5 percent nationwide. The United States ranked second behind Mexico

of the world's wealthiest countries with the highest childhood poverty rates, according to UNICEF's Child Poverty in Rich Countries report for 2005.

Hurricane Katrina put a face on poverty in living rooms across the nation and around the world. Nearly half of

Americans believed that the United States had become a nation of haves and have-nots, according to a 2005 poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. This disparity is particularly evident to African-Americans. According to a Pew poll in 2004, 81 percent of Blacks

said they felt the rich were getting richer while the poor were getting poorer, compared to 65 percent of Whites. And among 28 developed countries, the United States stands behind Mexico in terms of widest gap between the rich and the poor, according to CLASP.

Back in June, Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School held a forum on urban poverty in which NUL Policy Institute head Stephanie Jones participated along with New York Democratic Rep. Charles Rangel and others. A resounding consensus was forged – that poverty must be put on

the national agenda. They were not alone in their concern. They are among many others as worried about poverty in our nation and the world.

As part of its so-called Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations has resolved to halve the number of people living on less than a dollar a day by 2015. In August, U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson made narrowing the divide as one of his department's top priorities. In the U.S. Congress, Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., introduced legislation in 2005 patterned after the U.N. millennium goals to reduce child poverty in the United States by 50 percent within a decade. In June, Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., declared poverty "the great moral issue of

our time" in unveiling a plan to eliminate it in 30 years. Connecticut passed a law calling for a 50 percent reduction in child poverty by 2014. And similar legislation in California is awaiting the governor's signature.

Poverty not only robs the poor of opportunity and breaks their spirit, it costs our nation money – well beyond direct services. For every one-percentage point rise in the poverty rate, metropolitan areas are forced to spend an additional \$27.75 per capita on non-poverty related

services, according to CLASP.

That probably explains why Mayor Michael Bloomberg recently announced his own war on poverty in New York City, where one in five residents dwell below the

poverty line. In 2002, Miami Mayor Manny Diaz launched a \$2-million anti-poverty campaign in response to his city being designated the poorest major city in the nation by the U.S. Census.

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett recently established an anti-poverty commission to develop practical solutions to lessen the city's 26 percent poverty rate. And the U.S. Conference of Mayors has also set up its own Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity, chaired by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

Poverty cuts across all political lines. It is not a blue or red issue. It's, as the CLASP study notes, a purple issue. Of the 10 states with the highest poverty rates, 70 percent are represented by Republican senators and 60 percent led by GOP governors. Of the congressional districts with more than 20 percent of their residents poor, 80 percent elect Democrats.

With midterm elections on the horizon, it's time to put this issue on the national agenda before it tears our nation apart. It is in everyone's best self-interest to eradicate poverty before it eradicates our democracy.

Marc H. Morial is president and CEO of the National Urban League.

Cover Story, Continued from page 3.

to financially grapple with the price increases, if we can't then we're out. That doesn't mean all of us are out but some of us." Continuing his thought he says, "I don't know the state of the city's finances, but affordable housing is a key issue and they can at least take the lead to encourage it or figure out legally how they can provide incentives, and subsidies and they may be already doing some of that but how much they can do depends on what's in their budget, but more in this area needs to be done."

According to Mayor Nagin a program was in place to assist first time home buyers prior to Hurricane Katrina and he says will continue to be in place as he is committed to bringing back every citizen that has a desire to return but with the added incentive of a better quality of life which includes home ownership. "Prior to Katrina we set up soft second programs for first time home buyers where we were targeting female heads

of household, and we got 30,000 people off the poverty rolls. Now we are going to enhance that and we're going to probably raise soft seconds to maybe forty-thousand dollars. But right now the big bottleneck for us is that a lot of money is stuck in Baton Rouge."

Today Mayor Nagin stands in the crosshairs facing a barrage of criticism as the fall guy for the city state of stasis. And one person who is spending time lobbying for the city is State Representative Juan LaFonta who thinks it's premature and unfair to judge the mayor given he does not have the resources at his disposal to effectively manage the recovery. "I believe the criticism should not be leveraged on him until he receives the money, and then if something doesn't happen with the city, then if things aren't being done then let him be judged, but right now he can't do anything because there is not the resources available and he shouldn't be held solely responsible for what's not

happening." An unnamed source says personality conflicts, egos, and a struggle for control are some of the reasons slowing the recovery. Jerome Smith feels this rebuilding should be less about personalities and individuals, "Ray Nagin is just a link in the chain and our achievements are not to be seen in terms of Nagin, but in terms of tomorrow."

For many citizens toxins that are dangerous to one's health and access to healthcare has been one of the reasons some have chose to not return to the city. Lisa Williams, a resident of New Orleans East now living in Houston Texas says, "I would love to return to New Orleans but I have a son with asthma and I'm taking care of my mother who is elderly, but without enough hospitals open, and my son having asthma I don't see myself returning to the city anytime soon." To those with this dilemma the mayor says he completely understands, but says the city is

in the process of dealing with this issue, "I would say to someone who has serious healthcare issues or is caring for someone who does this is not a good time to return to the city I think we need another three to six months to deal with this issue." "But in October University Hospital is going to re-open with three hundred and fifty beds which are going to take care of some of our healthcare needs." Additionally he says about the struggle to rebuild the city, "This is pioneering work no city has ever been completely shut down with eighty percent of it underwater, so there's nothing easy about being in the Big Easy right now."

While the rebuilding of New Orleans is a team effort that will require years to accomplish, the first one-hundred days into the second administration of Mayor Nagin can be judged in several ways it's all a matter of perspective. But regardless of one's perspective the reality is

that many parts of the city are still in dire straits, and the words of the Mayor about the city's progress may not mean much when what you've worked for your entire life lies in shambles, and remnants of your life are nothing more than debris. There is no doubt that rebuilding the city is an enormous task. As residents take control of their destiny forgoing the waiting game played by the government, they are taking matters into their own hands is admirable. But firm, decisive, and responsible leadership working together at all levels of government is also essential to the rebuilding of New Orleans; this great yet ailing city. One hundred days into Ray Nagin's second term has past, and the clock is still ticking like sand passing through an hour glass so goes the days of the lives of many New Orleanians dealing with a mix of hopefulness, hopelessness, and promises; many yet to be fulfilled.

SPORTS

Saints gave New Orleans something to cheer about with 23-3 win over Falcons

By:
PAUL NEWBERRY

Just 90 seconds into a game that was a horrific year in the making, the New Orleans Saints flopped on a ball in the end zone - and the party was on.

The defense beat up Michael Vick. Tom Benson danced off the field with his parasol. Even "The Superdome Special" worked to perfection. The Saints are home again. In an earsplitting return to their rebuilt stadium, the Saints gave the Big Easy something to cheer about - an undefeated football team that made it look easy with a 23-3 victory over the Atlanta Falcons on Monday night.

This one couldn't have been scripted any better for a team that spent all of last season on the road, and it couldn't have come at a better time for this city that is still struggling to overcome the devastation of hurricane Katrina.

"From the moment I signed with the Saints, I was looking forward to this," said quarterback Drew Brees, who joined New Orleans during the off-season. "It was a great night. It's something we'll never forget."

After a Super Bowl-like pregame show that included a performance by supergroups U2 and Green Day, the Saints wasted no time turning their welcome-home party into Mardi Gras: The Falcons' first drive went three-and-out, and special teams demon Steve Gleason sliced through the middle of the Atlanta line to smother Michael Koenen's punt.

The ball skidded across the goal line, where Curtis Deloatch fell on it for a touchdown - the first given up by the Falcons this season. Just like that, Saints sent an emphatic message to the NFL and the entire country: New Orleans is open for business.

DeLoatch ran over to the stands and pointed at the crowd of 70,003, as if to say, "Take that Katrina!" Undoubtedly, many more were cheering around this still-recovering city, some of them vowing to set up televisions outside government-issued trailers that pass for homes more than a year after the storm blew ashore, the levees broke and the water poured through.

"That set the tone," Brees said. "That's when we all knew. This was our day, our night."



New Orleans Saints owner Tom Benson parades through the Superdome with Rita Benson (L) and Saints owner/executive vice president Rita Benson LeBlanc (R) after his club beat the Atlanta Falcon 23 to 3 in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans on September 25, 2006. It was the first game to be played at the Superdome since it was used as a shelter during Hurricane Katrina over a year ago.

Benson, the Saints' once-reviled owner, broke out his parasol when it was over, bouncing off the field to "When The Saints Go Marching In" and reveling in the cheers of a fan base that feared he would take their team away.

The Saints dedicated a game ball to the entire city.

"It meant a lot to them when the Saints didn't leave in their time of need," rookie Reggie Bush said. "When the people of New Orleans needed something to look to for confidence and something to be proud of, they looked to the Saints."

The Saints (3-0) poured it on against the Falcons (2-1), who fell behind 14-3 in the first quarter and never recovered. Devery Henderson scored New Orleans' second TD on an 11-yard double-reverse, taking a handoff from Bush and cutting inside the pylon with help from a gutsy block by quarterback Drew Brees.

How could that play not work? When working on it in practice, the Saints dubbed their bit of chicanery "The Superdome Special."

John Carney kicked two field goals in the second period, including a 51-yarder that cleared the crossbar as time ran out. The Saints trotted to the locker room with a 20-3 lead and a rousing ovation ringing in their ears. The Falcons straggled off in the opposite direction, as if they already knew this wasn't going to be their night.

"As tough as it is to lose a game, I'd be lying if I said there isn't a little, little, little piece of me that didn't appreciate what this game meant to this city," said Falcons coach Jim Mora, whose father is the winningest coach in Saints history. "It meant a lot."

Of course, a Saints win seemed in the stars even before the kickoff. This was intended to be a showcase for New Orleans' rebirth, as frustrating and halting as that process has been for so many.

Fans clad in gold and black strolled around the French Quarter throughout a brilliantly sunny day, ready to look forward instead of looking back at those awful scenes of suffering inside the Superdome in the days after Katrina.

Those who had tickets to get inside the 31-year-old stadium found it spruced up with new scoreboards, bright video screens and plenty of fresh paint, all part of a US\$185 million renovation that was designed to keep the Saints from moving to San Antonio, Los Angeles or some other NFL-deprived city.

Showing the significance of the game, former commissioner Paul Tagliabue and his successor, Roger Goodell, were both at the Superdome. Signs were hung throughout the stadium, sending messages such as "Home Sweet Dome" and "Thank You America. New Orleans & Saints Are Here to Stay."

After Bono left the stage and former President George Bush took care of the coin flip, the Saints made sure the party would last all night. They dominated on special teams - also blocking a short field goal attempt by 46-year-old Morten Andersen - and shut down Atlanta's feared running game.

The Falcons, coming off a franchise-record 306 yards on the ground against Tampa Bay,



Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick is sacked by New Orleans Saints Will Smith late in the fourth quarter in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans on September 25, 2006. It was the first game to be played at the Superdome since it was used as a shelter during Hurricane Katrina over a year ago.

managed just 117 yards rushing on the inspired Saints. Vick had a miserable game, completing 12-of-31 for 137 yards.

"I never in my life heard a crowd roar so loud," Vick said. "It just goes to show the appreciation they have for having the New Orleans Saints back in the dome, bringing football back to the city. I commend them for that. They deserve it."

Any hopes of an Atlanta comeback were snuffed out on the first possession of the second half. New Orleans took the kickoff and drove 73 yards in 12 plays, burning more than 7 1/2 minutes off the clock before settling for Carney's third field goal from 20 yards.

"Who dat? Who dat? Who dat say dey gonna beat dem Saints?" the fans chanted.

Not the Falcons. Not on this night.

Alge Crumpler, the team's normally sure-handed tight end, dropped a pass in the end zone with no one around him in the first quarter. Andersen, still reviled in New Orleans for leaving to sign with the rival Falcons more than a decade ago, had a 25-yard chip shot swatted away by Josh Bullocks on the night the kicker became the second-oldest player in NFL history.

Even the referees chipped in, picking up a flag on a dubious pass interference call that could have extended a Falcons drive late in the third quarter.

About the only thing that didn't go right for New Orleans was a first touchdown for Bush. Still, "Saint Reggie" gave the fans several chances to cheer their rookie sensation, rushing for 53 yards and catching four passes for 19 yards.

Deuce McAllister handled the bulk of the ground attack, with 19 rushes for 81 yards. Brees was 20-of-28 passing for 191 yards. His favorite receiver was rookie Marques Colston - the fourth-to-last pick in this year's draft - who grabbed seven passes for 97 yards.

"If we had lost, the fans still would have been partying, they still would have been happy, because the organization is still in New Orleans," receiver Joe Horn said. "But we wanted to put the icing on the cake."

And what a cake. The Saints seized first place all to themselves in the NFC South while matching their wins from all of last season. Forced to play in San Antonio, Baton Rouge and East Rutherford because of the Superdome's massive damage, New Orleans struggled to a 3-13 record as a team without a home.

Now, they're home for good.

NEWS

Newsmaker, continued from page 5.

Besides Wright, recipients of the special award are Kimberly Dilosa, Executive Director, YOUTHAnasia Foundation, Inc.; New Orleans, La; Elise Hough, Executive Director, United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Houston, Houston, Tex; Vien Nguyen, Pastor MQVN Community Development Corporation, New Orleans, La; and Joe Dawsey, Executive Director Coastal Family Health Center, Biloxi, Miss. Each winner will receive \$105,000 to further the work of his or her program and a \$15,000 personal award.

"Last summer's devastating hurricanes brought into focus for all Americans the gaping holes in this country's safety net," said Catherine Dunham, Ed.D., CHLP's Program Director. "It reinforced what we know to be true; that local leaders taking the initiative are really the first and best responders. They deserve this special award as recognition of their extraordinary contribution to the recovery effort."

CHLP also awards \$1.2 million each year to health leaders who have surmounted substantial obstacles to improve the health of their communities. Since 1992, the program has distributed 140 awards in 47 states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico. Those chosen are nominated by civic leaders, health professionals, government representatives and others inspired by their efforts to provide essential health services in the communities they serve. For more information, go to www.communityhealthleaders.org.

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Vaccine, continued from page 7.

race, 77 percent for Asian children, 76 percent for Black children, 76 percent for White children and 76 percent for Hispanic children.

The CDC's National Immunization Survey reported that all children between 19 and 35 months are being vaccinated routinely at or near record highs. Researchers also used vaccination records for nearly 17,500 children from the households that participated in the survey.

The numbers steadily rose for Black children in recent years. In 2002, the rate was about 66 percent the study said. The rate for Hispanic children was slightly higher at about 68 percent in 2002.

Dr. Sarah Long, a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Chief of the Section of Infectious Diseases at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia, said the push of the CDC, her organization and schools has helped to make vaccinations more widely available in recent years.

"And (it's) becoming more ingrained in the culture of children when they're born in the hospital they are visited by a pediatrician and there's education that goes on. Not only about taking care of the baby when you go home, but how you take care of the health of the baby," she said.

Morris also believes that school systems

have really stepped up to spread knowledge about immunizations.

"Greater involvement of the school system to make sure that children are in fact vaccinated before they enter the school system is extremely helpful in making sure the rates steadily improve. I think that's really one of the important reasons that they are improving," he said.

Long said other technological innovations such as electronic databases kept by a number of hospitals and private practices also help doctors know exactly what kinds of vaccinations their small patients need.

The recent data from the CDC is particularly good news, Long said, considering parents tend to slack off with doctor visits and vaccinations between six and 12 months.

"Between six months and a year, you might lose the child because people get out of the habit of thinking (about doctor visits) and all of the barriers that are in our systems to getting an appointment," she said.

"Some of these poor families are not very knowledgeable about what they are going to do next week, let alone six months... If you can keep them to the 12 months, then you can get them at the 15 and 18 months," Long said.

According to the study, as many as 79 percent of children now get the

recommended shots that fight diphtheria, tetanus, chickenpox, polio, whooping cough, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B and Haemophilus influenzae.

Long said at her north Philadelphia hospital with predominately Black patients, she's found that cases of Haemophilus influenzae have been eliminated, thanks to a united front of parents, schools and the state of Pennsylvania.

"Before we had that (vaccination) we had 60 cases of meningitis due to Hib at this institution every year. And we haven't had a case of Haemophilus influenzae for years," she said.

The study did reveal some racial differences by individual vaccine. The CDC reported that in comparison to White children, chickenpox vaccination rates were higher for Black and Hispanic children. As for four-dose vaccinations of tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough and pneumococcal conjugate vaccines, White children had them in greater numbers than Blacks and Hispanics.

Long said the CDC's results make her hopeful that even more childhood diseases can eventually be better "controlled" or even "eradicated."

She said, "These vaccines are, in my opinion, miracles and we have to keep working that miracle everyday and work it for everybody's children."

Trailblazer, continued from page 4.



also planted 20 trees along the strip which the family has purchased themselves. The Amedees also donate much of their leftover food to Bridge House. "We receive so much. We are so blessed," says Annette.

Even though the Amedee parents have both entered into eternal rest, the fruits of their labor live on through their children. Glenn says that with The Wisdom, their mother's dream of a party hall has been fulfilled. Her lessons of togetherness and sharing also live on as the siblings all play an integral part in the functionality of the

place. Annette sighs and laughs heartily as she explains what role each of them play behind the scenes and in the forefront: brother Donald is Facility and Grounds Manager, sister Val Ann is responsible for the professional and tasteful decor, brother David (Annette's husband) is in charge of mechanical engineering and manages the food and beverage department and brother Stephen heads up the bartending department. The Amedees also employ in-laws, cousins and other relatives. "This is a system," says Annette, stating that great businesses operate with strict systems. Every McDonald's, she says, runs a tight system.

With the charm of the city at their fingertips, the love of friends and family surrounding, and a tightly managed system in place, the Amedees have taken their father Clarence's advice and made their long pilgrimage toward the lake. They can now enjoy the breeze.

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Prices may vary after August 27, 2006 if there are market variations. "Was" prices in this advertisement were in effect on August 17, 2006, and may vary based on Lowe's Every Day Low Price policy. See store for details regarding product warranties. We reserve the right to limit quantities. Tax Credit Disclaimer: See your tax advisor for eligibility requirements. *Applies to single-receipt, in-store purchases of \$299 or more made August 24, 2006 through September 4, 2006 on a Lowe's consumer credit card account. No monthly payments will be required and no finance charges will be assessed on this promo purchase if you pay the following in full within 12 months: (1) the promo purchase amount, and (2) any related optional credit insurance/debt cancellation charges. If you do not, finance charges will be assessed on the promo purchase amount from the date of the purchase and monthly payments will be required. Standard account terms apply to non-promo purchases. APR is 21% (15.48% for purchases of \$2,000 or more). Min. finance charge is \$1.00. Offer is subject to credit approval. Excl. Business Accounts and ProjectCard. All installation services are guaranteed by Lowe's warranty. See Installed Sales contract for details. Professional installation available through licensed independent contractors. Lowe's contractor license numbers: AK#28341; AL#5273; AZ#ROC195516; CA#803295; CT#558162; FL#CGC1508417; HI Contractor's License No.: C 23784 - see store; IL Plumber #058-100140; IL Roofing #104014837; LA Master Plumber #1440 WSPS; MD# 91680,50931; MI#2102144445; Lowe's Home Centers, Inc., 6122 "B" Drive North, Battle Creek, MI 49014; NJ Plumbing - see store; NM#84381; NV#2-45450; Brooklyn, NY#1162261; Staten Island, NY#1160554; Suffolk County, NY#30182-H1; Rockland County, NY#H-09192-B6-00-00; Nassau County, NY#H1777890000; Putnam County, NY#PC2742-A; OR#144017; TN#3070; TX TRCC #14447 and Texas State Plumbing License Number Available Upon Request; VA#2701-036596A; WA#982BN; ND#30316; Washington DC #100594; DCRA# 52185-53006539, 52185-53006554, 52185-53006552, 52185-53006557, 52185-53006533, 52185-53006534, 52185-53006541, 52185-53006543, 52185-53006537, 52185-53006544©2006 by Lowe's. All rights reserved. Lowe's and the gable design are registered trademarks of LF, LLC. 60894 001/060894/107