

NAACP Talk

South Middlesex Branch Vol. X No. 1 Spring 2007

From the President Yvonne B. Brown

We Are "Change Agents"



There is a popular hymn which reminds us that "We've come this far by faith." As a race, we have endured many hardships. However, they were merely detours which lengthened our journey along the path to excellence, achievement, and attainment. This year's 13th Annual GospelFest theme, "Sing a New Song for Equality and Justice", identifies us as "change agents" filled with hope,

openness, electricity, and renewed energy. We are a "beautiful people" with a past, present and a future. Our scale of justice has been recalibrated and reconfigured so that it can accommodate those persons who seek a more balanced life. This scale is broad enough and sturdy enough to support a harmonious blending of those from near and far as well as those with a disability or without, regardless of their religious beliefs or gender persuasion. Let us stand tall, shoulder to shoulder, as we render melodic tones loudly and clearly for equality and justice. But, let us not forget those who may need assistance to be with us. We must lead them and teach them so that they shall not perish, wither, or die from stagnation or regression.



At the Installation of 2006-2007 Branch Officers and Executive Committee: *Front row, left to right:* Lillie Jefferson, Branch co-founding member; Yvonne Brown, President. *Standing, left to right:* Matthew Jefferson, Branch co-founding member; Patricia Owens Marshall; Aljerin Butler, Treasurer; Barbara Pontecorvo; Crystal Brown; Orlando Lightfoot, M.D., First Vice President; Robert Schecter, Ph.D., Second Vice President; and Barbara Smith Fontes, Secretary.

Branch Helps Craft New Affirmative Action Policy for Framingham

Led by Chair William Robinson, the Branch Political Action/Education Committee helped, during the course of a number of meetings over the past year with the Human Resources Department, to craft a new Affirmative Action Policy for the Town of Framingham. Satisfied that the new policy is a good one, the Committee has now accepted the invitation of Hu-

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Support the Continuing Civil Rights Struggle! 13th Annual GospelFest Saturday, March 24, 2007

4:00-6:00 pm, Greater Framingham Community Church
Downtown Framingham. Corner of Franklin and Park Streets.

Last year's GospelFest was outstanding, and this year's will be equally exciting. Some of Greater Boston's finest talent in dance and choral singing will be performing. Come and participate in the major fund raising activity of the Branch and help "Sing a New Song of Hope for Equality and Justice." *For tickets — \$15.00; Children 12 and under free — call 508-879-7612. Tickets will be available at the door.*

The Branch at Work

Youth Empowerment Workshops

The Youth Empowerment Workshops began February 10 at the Greater Framingham Community Church. The purpose of this pilot program is to empower youth ages 6-10 years old so that they might be successful throughout their lives. Committee members from the Greater Framingham Community Church and the Boston Vicinity Club of the Business and Professional Women, Inc. partnered with the South Middlesex Branch NAACP to offer the program, which included an orientation for the parents. The youth discussed manners. Subsequent workshops will address self-esteem, table setting, restaurant reservations, grooming, and proper dress. A culminating brunch will be held March 4, 2007 for the parents of the participants.

Verizon Grant for Computer Training

The South Middlesex Branch has received a grant from the NAACP New England Conference, through its association with Verizon, which will allow for computer training and supplies in order to stimulate and improve communication among members as well as with the community. We are grateful for the assistance of Crystal Brown, Branch Treasurer Al Butler, and Ron Butler of the

Greater Framingham Community Church, who labored for many hours to make this a reality.

Yahoo Email Account for Branch Members

South Middlesex Branch members may sign up for a Yahoo account so they can access information about Branch activities and meeting notices via email on the Internet. To sign up, contact Al Butler at 508-481-6374 or Abutler33@netscape.net.

Health Committee

Petrina Mattier spoke at the Branch meeting on January 9 about testing, prevention, and research related to HIV/AIDS. As a subcommittee of the MetroWest Workgroup to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health and Health Care, the Youth Outreach Committee is addressing childhood obesity. Joan Hill, Nutritionist, presented a workshop on healthy eating at the January 29 meeting of Body and Soul. This is a partnership among the Branch, the Health Ministry of the Greater Framingham Community Church, and the American Cancer Society. Walkers and others are invited to participate in the Project Bread walk for Hunger on Sunday, May 6 in Boston.

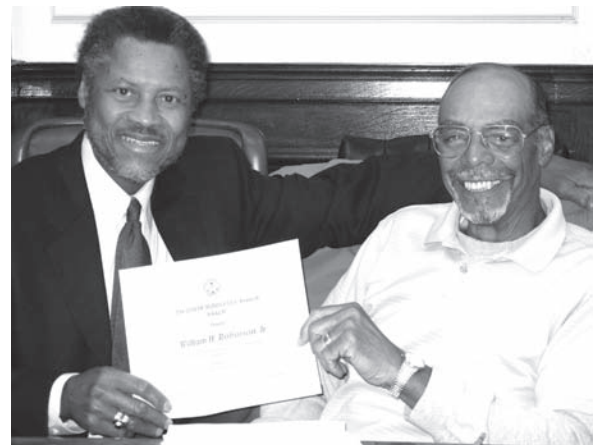
Make a Difference! Become an NAACP Activist!

We would like to invite you to share your talents, skills, and time with the South Middlesex Branch NAACP. Perhaps there is a special, short term project that you might chair or support. Please send your ideas and community concerns so that your voice might be heard. Many changes are taking place, and our youth need the involvement, respect, and support of responsible citizens. Adequate education, affordable housing, economic independence, meaningful health care and insurance needs must be identified and planned. Adults must reach out to the youth. The NAACP National Office has placed our youth in a Youth Council, but adults are needed to assist with their activities. Please try to volunteer to launch this endeavor. *See page four to choose your area of interest.*

Affirmative Action Policy *Continued from page 1*

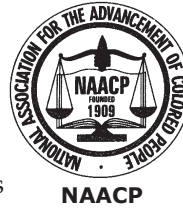
man Resources Director Monica Visco to monitor, with her, the implementation of the policy and to work with community organizations to forward for possible employment the names of minorities, now underrepresented in the Town's workforce. Branch 2nd Vice President Robert Schecter, PhD, who helped Robinson suggest improvements to the Affirmative Action plan, will also be involved in monitoring its implementation.

Bill Robinson, right, receiving a certificate of thanks for service on the Branch Executive Committee from Branch 1st Vice President Orlando Lightfoot, MD.



Branch Leads Legislative Initiative to Reduce MCAS Achievement Gap

Legislation to add additional assessments to the current single, “high stakes” MCAS test has been crafted by the Branch in association with Brazilian American Association (BRAMAS) and League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). At the request of the three groups, the proposal has been introduced for legislative consideration this year by Sen. Karen Spilka, Rep. Tom Sannicandro, and Rep. Pam Richardson. The effort, which aims to reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students — now defined solely by the MCAS test — was led by Branch Education Committee Chairs William Robinson



NAACP



League of United Latin American Citizens



Brazilian American Association

Best Practices in Education Project Proposes Reform

The Branch’s recent legislative initiative is based on its “Best Practices in Education Report,” the fruit of a two-year project headed by Branch Education Committee co-chairs Anita Rust and William Robinson (who continues to head the Branch’s continuing education reform effort).

The Report, which has been distributed to key public officials, elected representatives and school administrators, suggests ways to close the demonstrated achievement gap (GAP) between white students and those with minority, ethnic subgroup, non-English speaking, or economically disadvantaged demographic profiles.

The Report summary emphasizes “the importance of improving the learning environment as a way to address closing the gap. Central to improving the environment is embedding disadvantaged students’ ‘identity factors’ — the cultural traits with which they can identify — into classroom teaching so the students feel included in the learning process. The report recommends promoting improved student/ teacher relationships that can foster the positive classroom engagement needed to successfully embed the missing of identity factors.

“The report also calls for wider

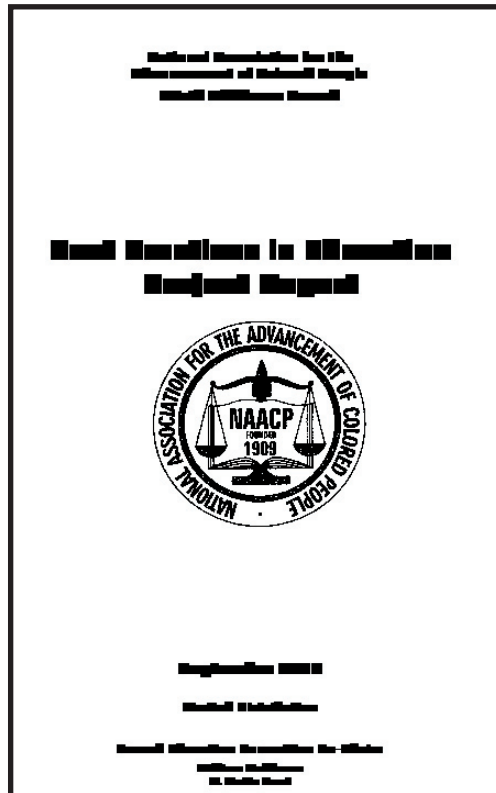
community involvement, because everyone has a role to play as we come together to diminish the gap. Happily, information gathered by the project indicates a community willingness to work jointly to improve the learning environment. It is also

public housing, recreation, the YMCA, Head Start, and many more, as well as in the legislature through our local elected representatives.

“Finally, the Report suggests that a slightly different way of thinking about the organization of local education can facilitate the changes necessary to close the gap. Although there are three school districts in Framingham to which families can send their children, together each may be viewed as part of a single “virtual” district comprising comprehensive curriculum options and instructional delivery frameworks. In such a system, individual plans can be created for each student.

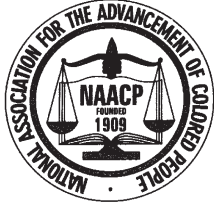
“Indeed, students would have the option of designing their educational pathways because, as public school citizens, funding will follow them if they choose to transfer among the three local districts. If a student has an educational misstep, a change of mind, or a retention problem, reverse transfer options will also be open to him or her within the virtual district. Moreover, each district can provide services to help the student transfer and adjust to a different learning environment.”

For a copy of the Report, call 508-429-1379 or email billzel@yahoo.com.



clear that participants in the local effort can be found in various agencies throughout the community— health services, social services, legal ser-

NAACP
South Middlesex Branch
P.O. Box 265
Westborough, MA 01581-0265



13th Annual Gospel Fest!

*"Sing a New Song for
Equality and Justice"*

Join the Branch and Choose Your Area of Interest!*

NEW RENEWAL Date _____

Name _____

Address City/Town/Zip _____

Tel. _____ E-mail _____

Registered voter yes no

Type of Membership

Adult \$30. **Youth (18-21)** \$15. **Youth (17 and under)** \$10. **Incarcerated inmate** \$12.

Life Junior (13 and under) \$100. **Bronze Junior (13-21)** \$400. **Life Adult: Silver Life** \$750.

Gold Life: \$1500. **Diamond Life:** \$2500. **Annual Corporate Membership:** \$5000.

* Please select the three committee activities that most closely reflect your interests

Education Health Political Action Legal Redress Finance
 Membership Environmental Justice Youth Work Economic Development Labor & Industry
 Communications, Press & Publicity Veterans' Affairs Officer/Executive Committee

Mail Memberships to: South Middlesex Branch NAACP, P.O. Box 265, Westborough, MA 01581-0265