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Join in the MLK Jr. Day celebration

By Lynn R. Parks

When Julius Mullen and his wife, NaTasha, founders of Seaford Parents for Education of African American Kids, were honored at the 2007 Martin Luther King Day of Celebration, he told the people attending the day's prayer breakfast that everything he and his wife do is for the benefit of the community's children and teenagers.

"Our young women and young fellows, they are the reason we do what we do," he said. "All the two of us do is talk about these kids." Western Sussex County will hold its 13th annual MLK Day of Celebration Monday, Jan. 17. And the focus will still be on the youth of the community, said spokesman Herb Quick.

"The farther we get away from Dr. King's time, the more we are faced with younger people not knowing about Dr. King as much as we would hope for," Quick said. "We want to send them a solid message about what Dr. King stood for."

To strengthen the day's message, its committee has pared events down to just a prayer breakfast. Celebrations before this one have featured activities and competitions at Seaford High School.

"We will revisit possibly having the high school activities for next year," Quick said. "But for this year, we wanted to strengthen our prayer breakfast, to make sure that the meaning of the day is getting out."

The Western Sussex Martin Luther King Day of Celebration was first held in 1999, 31 years after the civil rights leader was assassinated. In its inaugural year, it was sponsored by Seaford's Invista nylon plant, which at the time was owned by the DuPont Company. It was started, Quick said, to "honor Dr. King as well as individuals in the community who are carrying on in the spirit of Dr. King."

Quick said that a prayer breakfast has been held with the Day of Celebration since 2004. The MLK Day of Celebration committee, headed by Seaford Councilwoman Pat Jones, took over planning of the event in 2006.

Also since 2004, a person from the community has been selected for special recognition during the celebration. In addition to Julius and NaTasha Mullen, honorees have included the former state Rep. Tina Fallon, John and Otelia Oliver, Carlton Cannon, minister at Clarence Street Church of God, and retired physical education teacher Regina Batson.

Tanya Ricketts-Smack, who is a day-care provider in Seaford, was the most recent honoree, receiving her award at the 2010 celebration. "I'm honored, and surprised," she said at the time. "I guess you just don't realize that people are looking at you and at what you are contributing."

Jones still heads up the celebration, which this year for the first time will be held at the Heritage Shores clubhouse in Bridgeville. Honorees will be Derek and Monica Sheets, Seaford, who are foster parents and coaches.

For your information The Martin Luther King Day of Celebration will be Monday, Jan. 17, the day on which the U.S. celebrates King's birthday. The event, which will feature a prayer breakfast, will be held in the Heritage Shores clubhouse, Bridgeville, beginning at 8 a.m. Tickets are \$20 and are available beginning Monday through chairwoman Pat Jones, 628-1908 or [HYPERLINK "mailto:pj@easternshoreafam.org"](mailto:pj@easternshoreafam.org) pj@easternshoreafam.org. Additional information is available on the website www.easternshoreafam.org.

Food collection drive underway Home Team Realty will be sponsoring a food driveto support the Seaford Food Closet and Retemp Development Center in Laurel. All non-perishable food items can be left at Home Team Realty located at 959 Norman Eskridge Highway, Seaford. Food will be collected until January 31. Call629-7711 with questions.

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