



2006





Leroy Williams

A Message In The Storm

This play is about life conditions, tests, trials and tribulations that we all go through in life. Through it all, God has promised to bring us through as long as we keep our trust in him. "A Message In The Storm" takes place in a small country town called Fatback, Fla. Pastor Eugene Sinkfield, better known as the Boogie Woogie Preacher, hears a late-night emergency announcement on the radio station that Tropical Storm Junebug has been upgraded to a Category One Hurricane. There are no more shelters in town, so he decides to use his church, Down To Earth Christian

Ministry, as a shelter. The characters in this play at some point in their lives made decisions or will make decisions that have brought about or will bring about a change in their lives. The message of salvation is making its way through Fatback through its audience, and throughout the world.

A Message in the Storm, written by Leroy Williams, will debut with two shows only on Feb. 4 at the Pensacola Saenger Theatre at 2 pm and 7 pm. Purchase tickets at Stage Right Christian Music Store in University Mall and Cordova Mall and at all Ticketmaster locations. Ticket prices are \$20 or \$22 the day of the show.

PCARA PRODUCTIONS

Presents



THE NATIONS MOST SPIRITUAL
UPLIFTING GOSPEL STAGE PLAY

A MESSAGE IN THE STORM

a MUST-SEE production!

BY AWARD WINNING
PLAYWRIGHT
LEROY EUGENE WILLIAMS, JR.



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2006

2:00 P.M. & 7:00 P.M.

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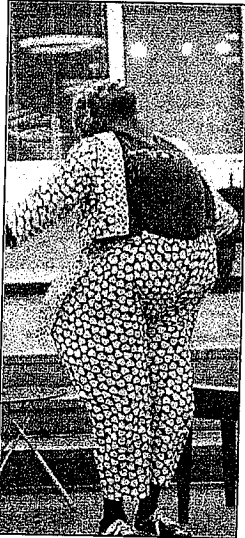
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Production set for Feb. 4

PCARA cast members to perform 'A Message In The Storm'



'A Message In The Storm' is a gospel comedy stage-play that was written by Leroy Williams. Two shows (2pm & 7pm) will be held at the Pensacola Saenger Theatre. For ticket information, call Williams at 444-0646.

PCARA Productions

presents

A Spiritually Uplifting Gospel Stage Play

"A Message In The Storm"

The MUST SEE production

Saturday, February 4, 2006

Pensacola Saenger Theatre • 2:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Tickets are available at STAGE RIGHT CHRISTIAN MUSIC STORE in University & Cordova malls, BROADWAY MENS WEAR (6249 N. Davis Hwy.) and ALL TICKETMASTER LOCATIONS

For more information, call 850.444.0646, 1(800) 844.1568 or visit www.amesessageinthestorm.com

NEIGHBORS

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Play filled with wacky cast 'A Message in the Storm' takes the stage Saturday

Barbara Todd
News Journal correspondent

It's probably the only gospel stage play with prostitutes, a transvestite and a minister called "The Boogie Woogie Preacher" in the cast, and it opens Saturday at the Saenger Theatre.

These are just a few of the wacky characters who appear in "A Message in the Storm," authored by Pensacola's award-winning playwright Leroy Eugene Williams Jr. Despite some of the shady people who appear on stage, the play is definitely G-rated, as are the many previous Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association productions.

Williams founded PCARA in the late 1980s to help prevent illegal drug use, pregnancy and violence among Pensacola's youth. Major fundraisers for the organization are the annual gospel plays that Williams writes, produces, directs and often acts in. "The Boogie Woogie Preacher," his play that was produced two years ago, won the American Gospel Music Award for The Best Play of the Year for 2004. Williams accepted the national award in New York in July.

"That was an experience I'll remember for the rest of my life," Williams said. "When I got to (the Wings Theatre) everybody was getting out of limousines, and I was in a taxi, so I asked the driver to drop me off around the corner."

At a recent dress rehearsal, Williams' daughter, Bre'Yonna, 9, a third-grader at Longleaf Elementary, was practicing for a dance number with several other young cast members.

"My favorite thing about being in the plays is the funny parts," she said.

"A Message in the Storm" has plenty of funny parts, but it also carries the message that life's trials and tribulations can be overcome with God's help. Pensacola audiences will relate easily to the plot, which unfolds in a Florida town as a hurricane threatens to make landfall.

The play's large cast includes Quint Studer, owner of the Studer Group and the Pensacola Pelicans, who plays Ted-Ain't-Scared Williams. After seeing a recent PCARA Youth Extravaganza production, Studer and his wife, Rishy, were so impressed with the performers' talents and the opportunities PCARA provided area youths that they decided to become a part of the organization.

"When Leroy asked me if I wanted to be in this play," Studer said, "I told him that I'd do anything that will help raise money for PCARA."



John Blackie@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

Demetrice Puryear and Lena B. Harvey, who play church board members, perform during a rehearsal for the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's rendition of "A Message In The Storm."

Want to go?

- **WHAT:** "A Message in the Storm."
- **WHEN:** Saturday at 2 and 7 p.m.
- **WHERE:** Saenger Theatre.
- **TICKETS:** \$20. They are available at: Stage Right Christian Music Store, University Mall and Cordova Mall; Broadway Men's Wear, 6429 N. Davis Highway; all Ticketmaster locations.

■ **DETAILS:** 444-0646, (800) 844-1568 or www.ameessageinthestorm.com

Want to belong?

All area youths from ages 2 through teens may become part of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association. There are no membership fees. Contact: Leroy Eugene Williams Jr. at: 444-0646 or (800) 844-1568.

Play delivers message of hope through comedy

FROM IB

small, country town that finds itself under the threat of Hurricane Junebug. Pastor Eugene Sinkfield, the title character from "The Boogie Woogie Preacher" decides to open his church as a shelter of last resort to a host of eccentric characters, all of whom have made life-changing decisions.



Franklin

Darin Franklin, 31, plays Deacon Frankie Lee in the production.

"My character assists the Boogie Woogie Preacher with bringing everybody to the shelter," said Franklin, who has performed in a number of PCARA

productions and participates in its youth mentor program. "He's secure in his faith, but he's funny as well."

Another veteran performer is Charisse Charles, who started behind the curtain "when she first joined PCARA nearly 10 years ago."



Charles

"I help Mr. Williams with the administrative side of things, and that's all I did at first, until they needed me to fill in a couple of times on stage," said the 43-year-old paralegal.

"I sort of fell into performing." Charles will star as Martha Lee, whom she described as a "kind of feisty, straightforward older lady."

The rest of the cast is made up of a number of PCARA regulars, including Williams, who will return to the stage as Pastor Sinkfield, as well as some new performers, like local health-care consultant and owner of the Pensacola Pelicans baseball team Quint Studer.

"We want people to realize that these are *completely* productions," said Williams, who hopes to see more new faces in future productions. "PCARA is not just for African-Americans — everyone is welcome here."

What does he hope audiences will take away from "A Message in the Storm?" "Preparedness for the upcoming hurricane season, remembering to look out for your neighbors and knowing that God can see you through any storm."



Leroy Williams, who plays Pastor Sinkfield, and Karen Sigler, who plays Mrs. Sinkfield, rehearse a scene from "A Message in The Storm."

John Blacklee@PensacolaNewsJournal.com



Inside

■ With a best-selling cookbook and a new magazine, Rachael Ray is edging into Oprah territory with her own daytime talk show. **Page 3B**



LEFT: Etheldra Hayes-Sharp, who plays Annie Mae Bush, sings during rehearsal for "A Message in the Storm."

BELOW: Leroy Williams is dressed as Pastor Eugene Sinkfield, the character he plays in the upcoming production.

Photos by John Blackie ©Pensacola News Journal.com

'Message in the Storm'

Music-filled gospel play takes the stage Saturday

Rebecca Ross
@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

Blue roofs still dot the Pensacola Bay Area more than a year after Hurricane Ivan, and many victims of last year's Hurricane Katrina in Mississippi and Louisiana are still searching for a new home.

With so many along the Gulf Coast still reeling from two brutal hurricane seasons, Leroy Williams feels that it's the right time to offer hope, humor and comfort with "A Message in the Storm."

The music-filled gospel stage play is the latest brainchild of Williams, a Pensacola writer, actor, producer, director and founder of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing uplifting local entertainment and offering young people alternatives to drugs and violence.

Williams has produced several

hit productions for the group throughout the years, including "The Boogie Woogie Preacher," which was chosen "Best Play of the Year" at the American Gospel Music Awards in 2005 in New York City.

The idea for "A Message in the Storm" came to Williams through divine inspiration, he said.

"We had not experienced Hurricane Ivan when I started writing the play," said Williams, who began work on the script in August

2004. "Then all of the storms started coming, and I felt like God had meant for me to write a serious message of hope and salvation from a comedic standpoint."

The production's storyline is one to which the community can certainly relate.

"A Message in the Storm" takes place in Fatback, Fla., a

See PLAX, 3B



Williams

Want to go?

■ **WHAT:** PCARA Productions "A Message in the Storm."

■ **SYNOPSIS:** Pastor Eugene Sinkfield, the "Boogie Woogie Preacher," opens his church as a shelter to a host of characters when Hurricane Junebug threatens the tiny town of Fatback, Fla.

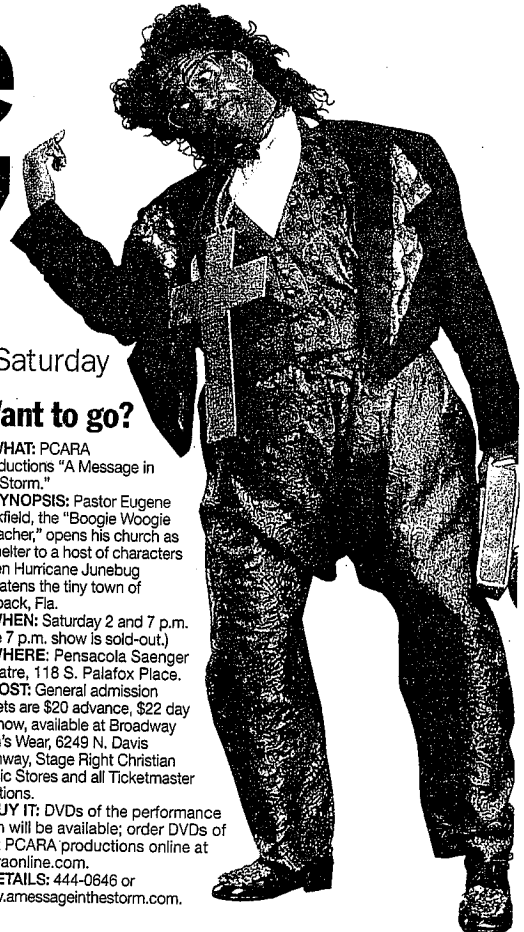
■ **WHEN:** Saturday 2 and 7 p.m. (The 7 p.m. show is sold-out.)

■ **WHERE:** Pensacola Saenger Theatre, 118 S. Palafox Place.

■ **COST:** General admission tickets are \$20 advance, \$22 day of show, available at Broadway Men's Wear, 6249 N. Davis Highway, Stage Right Christian Music Stores and all Ticketmaster locations.

■ **BUY IT:** DVDs of the performance soon will be available; order DVDs of past PCARA productions online at pcaronline.com.

■ **DETAILS:** 444-0646 or www.ameessageinthestorm.com.



A good man isn't hard to find if he has good woman by his side

Behind every successful man stands a good woman, so the saying goes.

For Founding Father George Washington, it was Martha. Eleanor stood by FDR. JFK had Jackie O. What would have become of MILK without Coretta? Would there be a G. W. Bush without Laura?

Here in Pensacola, there's a woman who not only stands, but also quietly sits, behind her man.

He's not a president or civil rights legend, but he is a leader in his own right.

For nearly 20 years, Leroy Williams has been front and center — writing, producing,

promoting, directing and acting in his own locally produced and God-inspired musical plays.

The 42-year-old playwright, who has won national awards, leads the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, better known as PCARA.

Today at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Williams' latest production, "A Message in the Storm," will play before sellout crowds at the Saenger Theatre.

While Leroy takes center stage, directing and performing in his music-filled gospel plays, his wife, T'reneshia, sits and watches her man do his thing.



T. Williams



L. Williams

Leroy works almost day and night on his full-time job with Solutia and with PCARA, the nonprofit organization dedicated to providing local entertainment and offering young people alternatives to drugs and violence.

Behind the scenes stands a dedicated wife and mother, the glue who holds a tight family together. "I support him 110

percent," she said. "I have to stay home to mind the kids and take care of the house."

Leroy's play, "The Boogie Woogie Preacher," was chosen Best Play of the Year at the American Gospel Music Awards in 2005, and Leroy posted in nationwide acclaim.

The "Patient Housewife" has received little attention. Through the years, T'reneshia Williams has shared her husband with the community, allowing him to use his God-given talents to spread his comedic ministry.

Sweetheart's since the 10th grade, they've been married for 21 years. With four

children and a grandchild, their busy days and endless nights are flooded with family duties. They overflow with social, athletic and educational activities.

And who do you think is responsible for seeing that the boys make their baseball games and the girl doesn't miss dance and singing classes?

She's the first to rise at dawn, the last to bed at night.

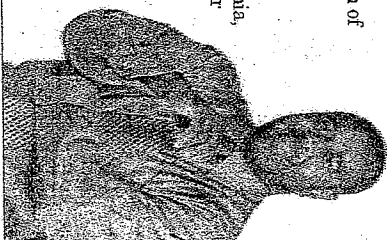
She laughs about the time their two sons played Little League baseball on the same day at the same park on separate fields. They both came to bat at the same time. She stood in the middle of

the park cheering for both of them.

"When he's gone, I have to be mamma, daddy, grandmother and the granddaddy," said T'reneshia, 42, who works five 10-hour shifts a week at Wayne Dalton.

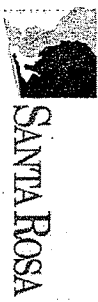
Leroy calls her his soulmate, and he knows he found someone special when T'reneshia became his wife.

"It was meant to be," he said with a big smile. "She understands that what I do is important, and I can count on her always to stand by my side."



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NEIGHBORS

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'Message in the Storm' highlights work of youth progra

After attending the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's production of "A Message in the Storm" on Saturday, a friend of mine said she now knew how it felt to be a minority. Not only is she white, but she is Jewish and considers herself an agnostic.

For one thing, the audience and cast probably were 99.44 percent black. For another, the play was very Christian oriented.

But was she sorry she went? Not by a long run.

She and I loved Leroy Williams' gospel musical comedy about a church in a small Florida town preparing for ancoming Category 5 Hurricane Junebug. The acting and singing were outstanding, while the play itself was funny

and brought a powerful message about looking out for your neighbors, no matter who they are.

I would be hard-pressed to pick a favorite in the cast that played before two sold-out audiences Saturday.

Despite costumes that were enough to make you laugh by themselves, Williams' portrayal of "Boogie Woogie Preacher" Man Pastor Sinkfield left you with no doubt that he could be a preacher in real life if he wanted.

And his daughter, Bre'Yonna, 9, gave an excellent performance as the daughter of a cheating man, and showed she is a talented praise dancer in the pre-show.

One of the most memorable characters (not that they weren't all memorable) was Butch, the

transvestite played to the hilt by Charles Gibson.

Rodney Jones, as DJ Shake-It-Loose, opened the show with a weather report that made it clear this play was going to be fun from beginning to end.

Joining the cast as on-the-scene weather man, Ted "Ain't Scared" Williams was Quint Studer, head of the Studer Group and owner of the Pensacola Pelicans.

The program lists 44 cast members, and all were excellent. I'm just sorry I don't have room to mention everyone.

If you didn't get to see the show, it will be out on DVD soon. Just call 444-0646 or visit www.pcaronline.com for more information.

I also want to thank Williams

for his work with PCARA. He founded the program in 1987 to assist in the prevention of illegal drug use, pregnancy and violence among the youth of the Pensacola community. The program does this through workshops and activities such as acting, singing, dancing, boxing, weight lifting and aerobics.

The nonprofit organization is open to all young people in the community, provided they maintain at least a C+ average in their school work. The organization will provide tutors to help them do this.

The group meets from 5 to 7 p.m. each Tuesday at the Pensacola Junior College Student Center, and volunteers and funds are always needed to maintain

the organization's programs. Mark your calendar now for PCARAS Big Community Cookout, which is open to the public, on May 27 at 2 p.m. in Terry Wayne Park, and its sixth annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza on June 24 at 6 p.m. at the Seeger Theater.

In the meantime, don't forget the Santa Rosa Art Association's Art Affair show in the Bo Johnson Life and Health Center at Pensacola Junior College's Milton campus this weekend. I know some excellent art will be on display and for sale at this event.



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E-mail: Claudin@PensacolaJournal.com

February 9 - February 22, 2006

Scenes from PCARA's 'A Message In The Storm'



Orlando Smith (c) puts the move on Paula Benson (r) and Nora Sligh (l) during scene five.



Tonya Green (l) and Shawana Spriggs at "Amy's Mansion."



Pastor Charles Thomas



February 9 - February 22, 2006

COMMUNITY

Scenes from PCARA's 'A Message In The Storm'



Donna Johnson (l), Charisse Charles (c) and Darin Franklin arrive at the church 2:00 a.m. in the morning. PCARA performed the stage-play Saturday at the Pensacola Saenger Theatre. The DVD will be available soon. Call 850.444.0646 or visit pcaraonline to order a copy.



Wendolyn Wilson (r), along with Jacqueline and John Walker, are crazy as bessie bugs.

PCARA Productions Presents LIVE!

A Message

In The Storm

A Spiritual, Up-lifting Gospel Stage-Play

Trials

Tests

Tribulations

Salvation

NEIGHBORS

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News Journal file photo

More than 3,800 people attended last year's Pensacola Community Athletic and Recreation Association's Big Cookout. Now in its 13th year, organizers only expect the event to get bigger.

PCARA cookout tries to make community a safer place to be

Organizers expect annual event to continue to grow

Barbara Todd

News Journal correspondent

Now in its 13th year, the Big Community Cookout keeps getting bigger.

Sponsored by the Pensacola Community Athletic and Recreation Association, the cookout last year was attended by more than 3,800 people, said Leroy Williams, PCARA's president and founder. The cookout is one of many PCARA annual events designed to bring together the community in an effort to replace violence and drug abuse with love, respect and unity.

The organization strives to enrich the lives of youths, socially and academically. Since the first meeting 19 years ago, Williams has been determined to "make PCARA work."

It's worked for Lakesha Williams (no relation), a 21-year-old junior at the University of West Florida.

"My mom and I have been involved in PCARA since I was 12 years old," she said. "I was in 'Back in the Good Old Days' (one of PCARA's annual gospel plays)."

Lakesha Williams has participated

Want to go?

■ **WHAT:** The Big Community Cookout. Take-lawn chairs or blankets.

■ **WHEN:** Saturday at noon.

■ **WHERE:** Terry Wayne East Youth Ball Park, West Jackson Street between J and K streets.

■ **DETAILS:** 293-5345

in many of the association's programs, which include classes in performing arts, athletic activities, mentoring and after-school classes and rap sessions. As she's done for several past PCARA cookouts, she will volunteer at this year's event.

"Besides plenty of good food, we'll have performing artists, storytellers, comedians and free giveaways," Leroy Williams said. Local organizations will set up exhibits and guest speakers will give tips on hurricane preparedness.

PCARA has long had the support and respect of community leaders.

"We've always felt PCARA was consistent with the types of programs that we want to support in the community," said Dr. Paul Rollings, a psychologist and the district administrator for substance abuse and mental health services of Florida's Department of Children & Families. The agency has helped fund PCARA since 1997.

"It's truly a community organization and it's never lost its roots in the community. I think it's had a lot of impact on the lives of young people through many of their programs."

LaFora Johnson, a junior at UWF, is another one of those young people on whom PCARA has had an impact.

"I'd go to the rap sessions and often do my schoolwork there," Johnson, 19, said. "There were always exciting activities going on."

Leroy Williams hopes that more than 4,500 people will be at this year's cookout. He can be sure that Johnson and Lakesha Williams will be there.

"I'll be cooking," Lakesha Williams said.

LOCAL

SUNDAY, MAY 28, 2006

Lottery

Here are the winning numbers selected Saturday in the Florida Lottery:



Cash 3: 2-8-9
Play 4: 2-0-1-3
Fantasy 5: 1-9-10-15-27
Lotto: 2-3-8-33-40-51
Lottery roundup: 5C
Information: www.flalottery.com

Area talent shines at cookout

Group hopes to enrich community with event

Polyana da Costa

@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

The Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association has opened the doors to many talented people through the years.

On Saturday, dozens of artists, including singers, poets and rappers, got on stage during PCARA's Big Community Cookout to perform to a crowd of about 1,800 at the Terry Wayne East Youth Ball Park.

Rena Files, a gospel song writer and PCARA member, said the community performances and the PCARA tours she has participated in helped give her career a big push.

"There are some local gospel

Coming up

■ **WHAT:** The sixth annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza.

■ **WHEN:** June 24 at 6 p.m.

■ **WHERE:** Saenger Theatre

■ **DETAILS:** 293-5345

promoters looking into my songs and there are some people in Detroit who are interested," Files said. "There are a lot of amazing talents in this community, and this is a chance for them to show what they can do."

The cookout also is an opportunity to bring the community together as well as an effort to enrich the lives of youth and adults, socially and academically, said Julius Benson, second vice president of PCARA.

The event, in its 13th year, offered free food, children's activities, music, entertainment and information.

Tracie Watson, an enrollment services representative at Pensacola Junior College, had a good response with the scholarship applications she distributed at the cookout.

"Parents are filling out the applications for their kids, and the kids also are coming to ask questions," she said. "It's a very good

way to reach the community."

Taharka Amen had a booth to promote Juneteenth, an annual celebration commemorating the end of slavery, and to educate people about black history.

"I'm here to teach them the real history and what is not taught in school," he said.

The event was supported by local churches, restaurants and community organizations, including the City of Pensacola, Pensacola Parks and Recreation and Escambia County Human Relations Commission.

"We need this type of thing for our children," said Eugenia Morton, who attended with her 13-year-old son. "It's our first family day of the year."



Bruce

@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

Keya Andrews, 13, and Shantay Harris dance on stage at Community Cookout.

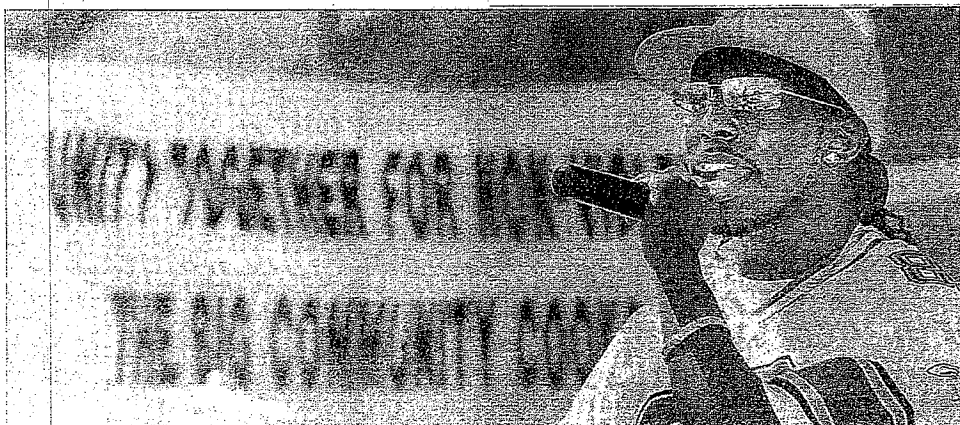
Surf and cookouts are sure signs that summer on its way



Photos by Bruce Graner@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

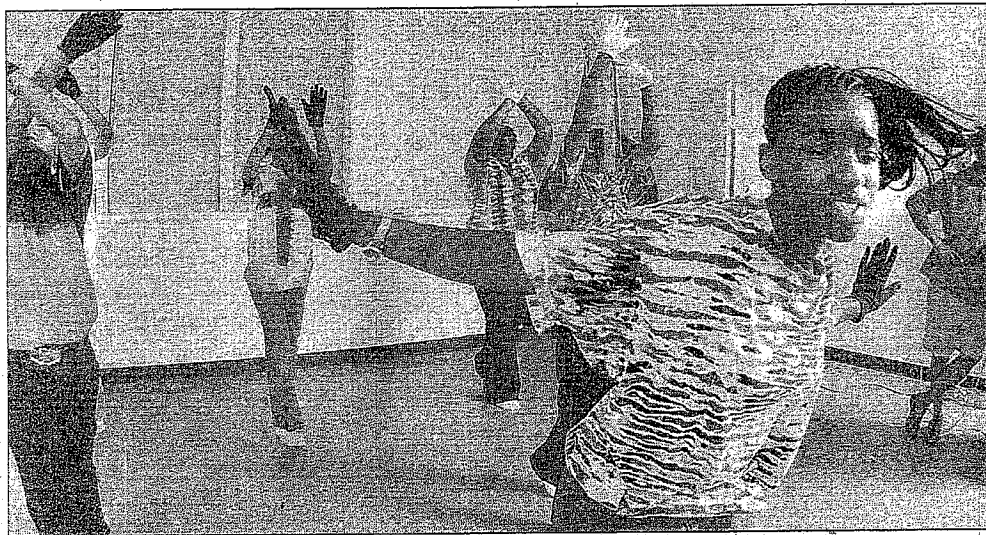
ABOVE: Umbrellas help beat the heat as the audience enjoys the entertainment at The Big Community Cookout on Saturday afternoon.

BELOW RIGHT: Mark "Tha Prechaz Son" Williams performs Saturday afternoon at The Big Community Cookout, sponsored by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.



NEIGHBORS

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News Journal file photo

Christal Madison leads the Mount Pilgrim Baptist Praise Dancers as they rehearse for a previous Youth Gospel Extravaganza presented by Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.

Youth Gospel Extravaganza packed with various acts

Barbara Todd
News Journal correspondent

The Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza provides an arena for young people to showcase their diverse talents.

More important, says PCARA's founder and president Leroy Williams, preparing for their 15 minutes of onstage fame teaches them valuable life lessons about tenacity, hard work and the pursuit of excellence. PCARA's goals are to reduce teenage pregnancy and drug use and to involve parents in their children's activities. The Youth Extravaganza helps to accomplish those goals.

"This year we've got 176 young people in the cast," said Williams. "We're worried about how we're going to fit them all on stage." The large cast includes praise dancers, hip-hop groups, gospel singers, drill teams, musicians and comedians.

The timing of the late June production is no accident. The cast begins rehearsals shortly after schools begin their summer vacations.

"Every Tuesday for five weeks, instead of being out on the streets, those kids are busy rehearsing," said Williams. "On off nights, they're usually busy working on improving their



Williams

Want to go?

- **WHAT:** Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's sixth annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza.
- **WHEN:** 6 p.m. Saturday.
- **WHERE:** Saenger Theatre, 118 S. Palafox Place.
- **COST:** \$10. Tickets available at the box office. The show is nearly sold out.

Want to join?

- **WHEN:** PCARA meets from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. every Tuesday.
- **WHERE:** Pensacola Junior College Student Center, Ninth Avenue campus.
- **COST:** Membership is free.
- **DETAILS:** 293-5345.

performance." Williams has almost guaranteed family involvement with the Youth Extravaganza. He requires that each cast member sell a minimum number of tickets.

Proceeds from ticket sales help PCARA fund its ongoing programs, such as tutoring and mentoring; rap groups, and coaching for the performing arts.

"After an Extravaganza, member-

ship in PCARA always picks up big time," said Williams. But performing is just one of the many ways in which Williams strives to help "his kids" excel. Motivational speakers encourage youths to aim high while PCARA volunteers help them maintain at least a C+ average in school. Field trips provide new experiences and the weekly meetings often promote lasting friendships.

"Leroy Williams is very passionate about his mission," said Rebecca Hale, office manager at the Escambia-Pensacola Human Relations Commission, one of PCARA's funding sources. "And personally, because I have children of my own who are involved, I'm one of PCARA's biggest fans."

One of PCARA's short-term goals is to acquire a van.

"There's a lot of kids who can't get to us because of the lack of transportation," Williams said. "But what we'd like most is for the community to help us get our own performing arts center. We want to show everyone just how much talent these kids have."

Quint Spuder, owner of the Pensacola Pelicans minor league baseball team, knows how much talent the youngsters have and he's impressed.

He and his wife, Rishy, attended the Youth Extravaganza for the first time last year. He said, via e-mail, that they watched youth of all ages filled with passion, a joy of life and unbelievable talent.

Section B

PENSACOLA
**News
Journal**
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LIFE

FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 2006



The Sons & Daughters of Destiny perform at last year's Youth Gospel Extravaganza.

News Journal file photo

Local talent shines at gospel extravaganza

Hey, kid — break a leg! Dozens of aspiring young performers will shine in the spotlight this weekend during the sixth annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza at the Pensacola Saenger Theatre.

The event, sponsored by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, will feature local youth in a variety of performances,

including gospel rap, drill teams, praise dancing and gospel singing.

The show begins 6 p.m. Saturday at the Saenger. All seats are general admission.

Tickets are \$12 in advance and \$14 day of show.

Details: 595-3880 or pcaronline.com.

Rebecca Ross

@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

Today's forecast



90°
73°

Rain: 65%

RealFeel Temp: 101° at noon

Five days out: 14C



www.PensacolaNewsJournal.com/weather

Monday 88°
72°

PENSACOLA News Journal

SUNDAY, JUNE 25, 2006

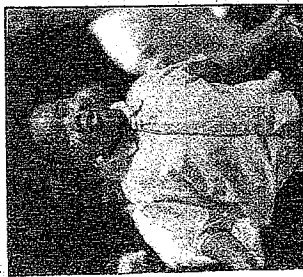
Gospel Extravaganza graces Saenger



Bruce Graner@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

The First West Florida District Baptist Association Praise Dancers perform Saturday evening as part of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's sixth annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza at the Saenger Theatre.

The large cast included praise dancers, hip-hop groups, gospel singers, drill teams, musicians and comedians. Proceeds from ticket sales help the association's ongoing programs, such as mentoring and coaching for performance arts.



Youth Extravaganza
see more pics page 3

THE Independent Voice

SERVING THE PEOPLE ALONG THE GULF COAST

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July 13 - July 26, 2006

COMMUNITY

PCARA's Youth Extravaganza

Below: Come. Urto. Me. Little. Angels. were one of Pensacola's most talented youth groups that performed at PCARA's annual Youth Extravaganza held last Saturday (June 24th) at The Pensacola Saenger Theater. Praise dancing, rap, comedy and soloist were among the many talents displayed. A dvd of the performance is available through PCARA.





2005



LIFE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 2005

Lots to

Jazz, theater, country music, w
want — it's coming to a stage

Jahna Jacobson

@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

It's a new year. Resolve to get out of the house and see what our area has to offer. After having many events canceled or delayed by Hurricane Ivan, entertainment is back on track.

From country crooners to "The Barber of Seville," from Benny Goodman to the Harlem Globetrotters, the next three months offer a smorgasbord of entertaining options for area residents.



Williams

"I always look forward to the Martin Luther King parade," said Leroy Williams, a nylon textile technician at Solutia who serves on the company's parade committee. "I encourage everybody to come out and be a part of (the parade)."

Williams also is the ambitious writer, producer and director of "Holier Than Thou," a gospel drama and comedy com-

ing Feb. 5 to the Saenger Theatre.

"It's going to be a very, very big event — one of the best productions (the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association) has put on," said Williams, who has written more than a dozen plays including "The Boogie Woogie Preacher."

Before each of the two performances, some of the area's best youth talent will take the stage as opening acts, he added.

Other upcoming events offer a chance to get out and have some fun while giving back to the community — such as the third annual Two-Man Marcus Pointe Best Ball Invitational Charity Golf Tournament on Jan 29 and 30, the American Heart Association's 10th annual Heart Ball on March 19 and the Elberta Sausage Festival on March 27.

The golf tournament was originally scheduled for October, but had to be postponed after the hur-

NEIGHBORS

www.PensacolaNewsJournal.com/neighbors

Students can test FCAT skills

News Journal set to help with preparation for the FCAT

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, known as FCAT, is coming, Hurricane Ivan or not — although, because of Ivan, the test dates have been pushed back a week.

Starting today, the Pensacola News Journal is launching its third annual six-week series, "Test your FCAT skills," in preparation for the state test to be taken by students in mid-March. Specifically, we are addressing the reading portion of the test.

Each Thursday on the Neighbors page, you will find a story accompanied by an FCAT prep activity that will include vocabulary, multiple-choice, as well as short- or extended-response questions, requiring a written answer. Each subsequent week, answers to the previous week's questions will be provided on the Neighbors page, along with an explanation of why



Smith

they were the correct answers, according to the specifications of the FCAT.

You also will find helpful information in "Want to know about the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test?" We will provide insight into the mysterious workings of our state standardized test. Readers can expect tips for navigating reading passages, guidelines for written responses and common question-answering pitfalls, among others.

This series is designed to increase our community's understanding of the scope and complexity of the FCAT. Under Gov. Jeb Bush's A+ school plan, there is continued pressure on schools to have favorable FCAT outcomes. Public perception tends to focus on our local

students' inability to pass this "simple, stupid test."

The reality is, the FCAT is a comprehensive and challenging assessment of where students' skills need to be at each grade level. The goal of this series is to provide information about the FCAT so that parents, as well as community leaders, are aware of what is expected of our children, so we can all work together to better prepare them for this academic hurdle.

This series also lends itself to provide an opportunity for teachers, parents and students to use these same newspaper articles as practice tests for the Reading FCAT.

Gay Sherman Smith, M.Ed., is manager of the Pensacola News Journal's Newspapers in Education program. She can be contacted at GaySmith@PensacolaNewsJournal.com.

Hard childhood spurs man to show kids alternatives to drugs, violence

Barbara Todd
News Journal correspondent

Leroy Williams grew up in poverty on urban streets surrounded by violence and drugs.

As Williams matured, instead of becoming part of that street life, he transcended it and now shows Pensacola's inner-city youth how to do the same.

Want to know more?

Call Leroy Williams at 444-0646

Through Pensacola Community Art and Recreation Association, which he founded in the late 1980s, Williams, 40, shows young people that there are alter-

natives to becoming involved with street life.

"Our mission is to steer kids away from drugs, violence and teen pregnancy," Williams said. "We offer the kids activities that they want to be involved in anyway, like boxing, aerobics, acting and karate. We also offer tutoring and workshops on building self-esteem."

According to Williams, thousands of young people have attended PCARA meetings throughout the years. He said the organization serves more than 200 young people every year.

"My daughter was real shy," said Cynthia Westmoreland, 33. "Since she became involved with PCARA,



Bruce Graner@PensacolaNewsJournal.com
From left, BreYonna Williams, 8, and Tanese Brown Morrow, 8, get help with their homework from Cynthia Westmoreland. BreYonna and Tanese are with the PCARA Faith Dancers, and Westmoreland is one of their instructors.

she's become a wonderful dancer and she's into drama."

Westmoreland's daughter, Alexis Phillips attends Wedgewood Middle School in Pensacola and has been participating in PCARA programs for five years.

"Sometimes we have tutoring programs, or we have speakers who teach us about positive things like not doing drugs. It helps me in school a lot," said the 13-year-old, who makes A's and B's in school.

PCARA sessions are from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Pensacola Junior College Student Center. When the Student Center is available, weekend sessions are scheduled as well.

"We're so grateful to PJC for donating space to us," said Williams. "But most of all, we need a home of our own. We think that after 17 years, we've proved to the community what we can do."

He said they'd also like to buy a van to make it easier for participants to get to the sessions.

Because PCARA is now rehearsing for its annual gospel production, "Holier Than Thou," meetings have been suspended until the first Tuesday in February. The productions, usually sold out, provide most of the group's operating budget. Additional funds are provided by donations and grants.

"Our main objective is to serve the kids," Williams said. "Regardless of color or religion, but we also serve the families, many of them single parents."

Parents often join in, with a little urging from Williams, when they accompany their children to PCARA events.

"When I first brought Alexis to PCARA, I thought I'd just sit there and read a book," Westmoreland said. "Now I'm a dance instructor there."

This week's questions

This page is designed to help students improve their skills for the reading portion of the FCAT. Read the story above, determine the definitions, in context, of the vocabulary words and answer the questions.

Build your vocabulary
urban (adjective)
transcended (verb)
alternatives (plural noun)
steer (verb)
self-esteem (noun)

1. When Williams says, "Our mission is to steer kids away from drugs, violence and teen pregnancy," the word "steer" means:
(Grade Level 3-8)

(Hint: Go back and scan the article for this quote. Replace the word steer with the choices listed below. Which one fits the context/spirit of what Williams is trying to say?)

- drive
- wrestle
- push
- guide

2. This article is mostly about:
(Grade Level 3-10)

(Hint: Go back and skim the article. Which choice below fits in with the main idea of the passage?)

- Leroy Williams
- PCARA serving at-risk kids
- Kids not doing drugs
- Building children's self-esteem

3. According to the article, which one of the following is NOT mentioned as a PCARA service?
(Grade Level 7-10)

(Hint: Go back and scan the article. Find the services mentioned below in the reading passage and eliminate them to arrive at the correct answer.)

- drama activities
- exercise classes
- abstinence workshops
- boxing and karate

4. The information in this article could be best used as a resource for:
(Grade Level 5-10)

(Hint: Ask yourself, who is the

target audience?)

- students wanting to make A's and B's in school
- students interested in drama productions
- single parents
- inner-city youth looking for safe and fun activities

5. Read: Think: Explain — short-answer response:

(Hint: Remember, stick to the information provided in the text!)

How does the PCARA help kids?
(Grade Level 3-5)

How has Leroy Williams accomplished his mission?
(Grade Level 6-10)

Use specific information and details from the article to support your answer.

Answers

See the Neighbors Page on Feb. 3 for the answers to this week's questions or get them instantly online at www.pensacolanewsjournal.com/NIE.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

For information about these FCAT-style questions, contact Gay Sherman Smith at GaySmith@PensacolaNewsJournal.com.

COM Newspapers in Education
www.PensacolaNewsJournal.com



■ Korean rapper Roy Kim is struggling to become the next big thing in the tough world of rap music.



Photos by Bruce Graner@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

ABOVE: Some of the down-to-earth people get into a shouting match at the Ham Hock Cafe with the holier-than-thou crowd in Leroy Williams' play, "Holier Than Thou," during rehearsal at the Pensacola Junior College student center.

BELOW: Vickey, background, played by Demetrice Puryear, shows her feelings about Geraldine, played by Anita Johnson, during rehearsal.

'Holier Than Thou'



Gospel comedy about the self-righteous to take Saenger stage this weekend

Barbara Todd
News Journal correspondent

Leroy Williams' latest gospel play, "Holier Than Thou," takes a humorous look at the self-righteous.

"There are a few people who, because of their 'spiritual level,' tend to put themselves on a higher pedestal than others," said Williams, who wrote and directed the play. "I don't think that's what God wants us to do."



Williams
Although full of laughs, "Holier Than Thou" carries a timely message for Pensacola Bay Area audiences.

"We've just experienced our own storm, and we've watched other nations go through their problems," Williams said. "We want to encourage people to move on with hope."

Williams and the group he founded, Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association,

have produced a play every year at the Saenger Theatre since 1989.

PCARA's mission is to offer young people alternatives to drugs, violence and pregnancy. Proceeds from the productions help fund PCARA's free after-school programs, which offer tutoring, seminars and classes in acting, boxing and building self-esteem.

"It's all about our kids," said Williams, 40. "We are not a religious organization. We're community-based, and we're open to everyone, black white or green. We have no walls."

He said the productions often play to full houses that reflect that diversity.

Throughout the years, the PCARA productions have grown. "Holier Than Thou" has a cast of more than 25, said Anita Johnson, who plays the female lead. She said the troupe's first production 16 years ago had included only about eight performers.

Johnson, 47, a teacher at Weis Elementary School, plays the holier-than-thou Geraldine who is eager to share with the world her narrow-minded opinions about

Want to go?

■ **WHAT:** "Holier Than Thou."
■ **WHERE:** Saenger Theatre, 116 S. Palafox

■ **WHEN:** 2:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., Saturday.

■ **TICKETS:** \$20 in advance. \$22 at the Saenger Theatre box office, 444-7686. Also available at: Broadway Menswear, 6249 N. Davis Highway, 475-0700; Stage Right Christian Music Store, University Mall, 494-1331; Ticketmaster, www.ticketmaster.com

■ **DETAILS:** 293-5345.

everything and everybody. "Although the play has a message, it delivers it in a comical way," Johnson said. It causes us to examine ourselves."

Charisse Charles, 42, plays Lisa, Geraldine's long-suffering employee. By day, Charles is paralegal at Levin, Papantonio, Thomas, Mitchell, Echsner &

Proctor Law Firm.

"This play takes a humorous look at churchgoers," Charles said. "And it's fun to do."

Darin Franklin, 30, plays the male lead, the self-righteous deacon Curtis Lee Woodrow Jr. When Franklin finishes his day job at West Communications, he pursues two of his hobbies — acting and volunteering for PCARA.

"I work a lot with the kids in PCARA," he said. Franklin is helping prepare some of PCARA's children for a variety show to be presented before both performances of "Holier Than Thou."

Al Williams, youth minister at Zion Hope Primitive Baptist Church, has attended several of PCARA's productions.

"Leroy's plays show that Christians aren't the uptight and rigid people that some believe we are," said Al Williams, 37. He's invited many family members from Panama City and Louisiana to see this year's production.

"Laughing and having fun doesn't end when we become Christians," he added.



Relax — it's just religion

Check your ego at the door. Leroy Williams' new play, "Holier Than Thou," pokes fun at "people, who, because of their 'spiritual level,' tend to put themselves on a higher pedestal than others."

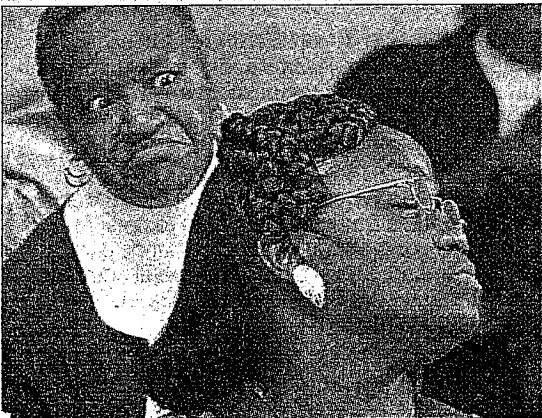
LIFE, 1B

PENSACOLA News Journal

MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2005

Weekend

www.PensacolaNewsJournal.com ♦ Feb. 4-10, 2005



'Holier Than Thou,' 2

'Holier Than Thou'

2:30 and 6:30 p.m. Saturday. PCARA Productions presents the hilarious gospel stage play,

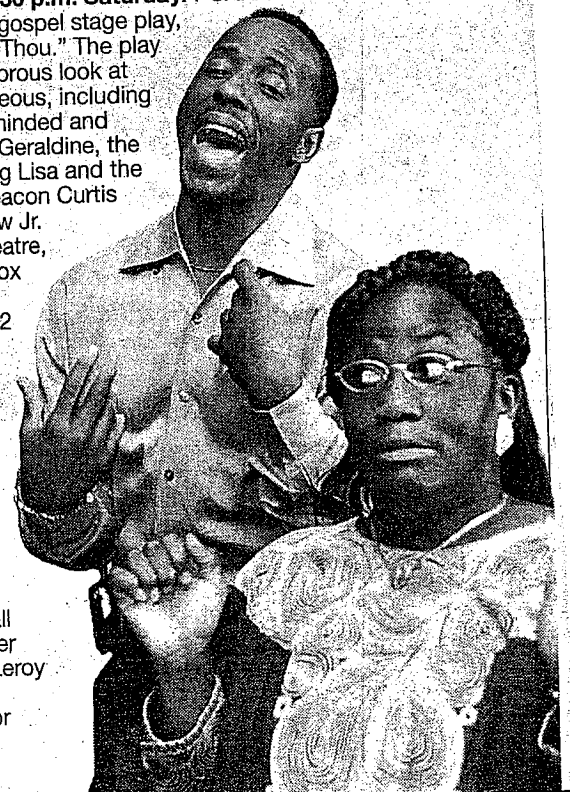
"Holier Than Thou." The play offers a humorous look at the self-righteous, including the narrow-minded and opinionated Geraldine, the long-suffering Lisa and the pompous deacon Curtis

Lee Woodrow Jr. Saenger Theatre, 118 S. Palafox Place. \$20

advance, \$22 at Saenger Theatre

box office. Tickets also available at Broadway Menswear, Stage Right Christian Music Store and all Ticketmaster locations. Leroy Williams, 444-0646 or 293-5345.

box office. Tickets also available at Broadway Menswear, Stage Right Christian Music Store and all Ticketmaster locations. Leroy Williams, 444-0646 or 293-5345.



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'Holier Than Thou'



Anita Johnson (c) plays Geraldine Shoemo in "Holier Than Thou." She eyeballs a delicious ham hock sandwich during scene three.

by Al Henderson
Independent Voice staff writer

If you did not attend Saturday's sold out play "Holier Than Thou," you missed an entertaining evening filled with loads of comic relief that made fun of church folks who think they are above everyone else and others who could stand a little more religion in their lives. Don't worry, because the hit gospel stage play written and produced by Leroy Williams (PCARA

Productions) will be coming to DVD this April.

"Holier Than Thou" begins with the church's Trustees Board interviewing three candidates to fill a vacant position. Board members, also known as the "Holier Than Thou Crew," talk about living Holy lives; however, each one of them possess his and her own shortcomings. Through comedy, Williams portrays board members as non-tithers, alcoholic hypocrites, among

other shortcomings. Crew members go as far as expecting the candidates to refrain from eating pork only to be caught grubbing it up at The Ham Hock Cafe in scene three.

The casting was near per-

fect as each actor portrayed their part as if they were living their everyday lives. Also, the actors in "Holier Than Thou" were allowed to expand on their characters. A good indication is the overall feel of the play. The tone did not feel as if it was written from one person's perspective.

Anita Johnson played Geraldine Shoemo, the candidate selected to be a part of the Holier Than Thou Crew. Upon further investigation during scene two, Shoemo's holy facade was exposed by a nosy assistant and a long-lost, handicapped boyfriend - Lorenzo portrayed by Williams.

The play came to a boil in scene three as crew members found Shoemo at the cafe enjoying a delicious ham hock sandwich. The two candidates passed over by the board confront the crew at the cafe and eventually divide the room. The battle of scripture quoting is refereed with a surprise appearance by the Boogie Woogie Preacher.

The scene is hilarious and ends with both sides learning something from each other.

PCARA Productions Presents

The nation's most hilarious gospel comedy **STAGE PLAY**

HOLIER THAN THOU



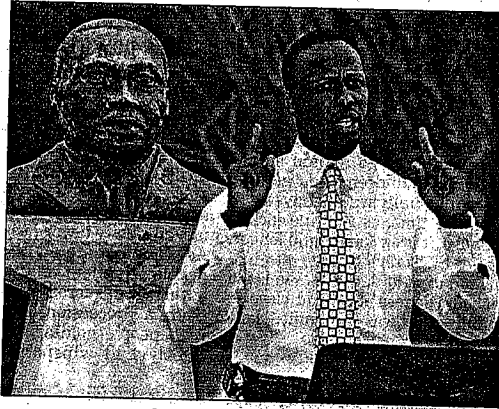
"It's both riveting and mesmerizing, absolutely exhilarating. This stage play is soul-saving and down right crying hilarious!!!"

www.PensacolaNewsJournal.com

PENSACOLA News Journal

TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2005

INSIDE: Civil rights leaders nationwide honor King, 8A;
New officers elected in local chapter of the SCLC, 4A



Gary.McCracken@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

Leroy Williams, president of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, delivers the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech Monday at Martin Luther King Plaza in Pensacola.

THE PENSACOLA VOICE

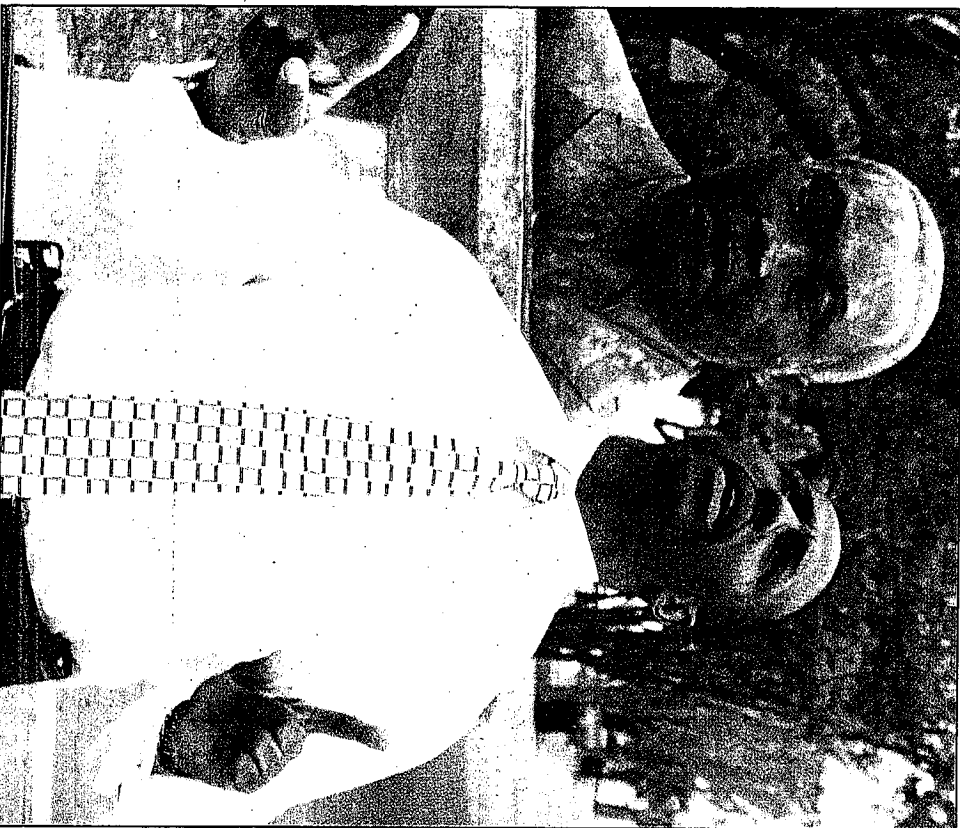
STRIVING FOR BETTER GATE TO THE SUNSHINE STATE

Volume 40 Num. 14

April 7 - April 13, 2005

50¢

SCLC Commemorates Anniversary of King Assassination



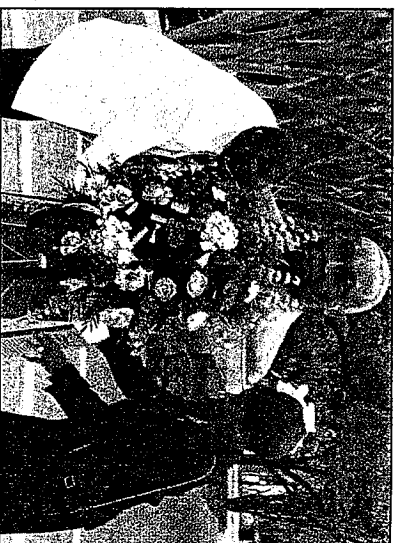
Leroy Williams, President of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, recites King's "I have a Dream" speech

by Diane Pajaud
Members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference held nationwide observances, April 4th, to commemorate the assassination of the organization's founder, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. 37 years ago.

The Pensacola Chapter of SCLC observed the 37th anniversary of King's death with a ceremony downtown at MLK Plaza.

"We want to keep the spirit of the dream alive and commemorate the life of the dreamer," said SCLC President Hugh King.

"Would he (Martin Luther King, Jr.) be pleased with our progress? Would he be pleased with our community? Would he be pleased with the level of education our children are receiving? Would he be pleased with the number of our young people that are in jail?... We need to stop creeping at this petty pace and join the fast



Hugh King and Mary Stanton place a reef at MLK's bust track," said Mary Armstrong of the occasion.

Hugh King added that the event kicks off ongoing SCLC activities including monthly mass meetings. He said the four areas SCLC calls "major concerns":

- Special event coordinator Charles Thornton cited those major concerns as the following:
 - Economic development and social economics;
 - Over zealous prosecutors in the State
- Attorney's office and overpassive public defenders;
- A credible, organized crime task force to handle citizen complaints involving arrests and inmate housing; and
 - Unity and cooperation within the Black/African American Community.
- SCLC will hold a mass meeting every fourth Sunday at 6:45pm at Greater Union Baptist Church. Spivey Gordon, SCLC National Treasurer will be the Guest Speaker for the April 24th Mass Meeting.

Group plans community cookout

Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association (PCARA) will sponsor its 12th annual United Together For A Non-Violent and Drug-Free Community from 2 to 7 p.m. on May 28.



Williams

The "big community cookout" will offer free food, exhibits, guest speakers (local heroes, community leaders, spiritual leaders, victims and perpetrators of violence). There will be performing artists,

storytellers, comedians and free giveaways.

Leroy Williams, PCARA president, said the purpose of the event is to bring both businesses and residents throughout the Pensacola community together to promote the following message: "Replace violence and drug abuse with God first, unity, love and respect for each other."

WHERE: Terry Wayne East Youth Ball Park, located between J and K Street on West Jackson Street.

DETAILS: 293-5345.

From staff reports

A week ahead

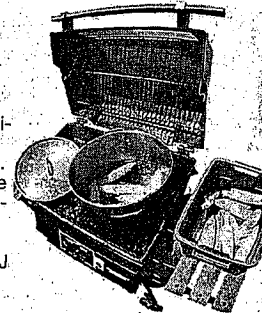
SATURDAY

28

12th annual Big Community Cookout

2 p.m. Saturday.

Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association invites area residents to the 12th annual Big Community Cookout. The event will feature free food and family entertainment. Terry Wayne East Youth Ball Park, West Jackson Street between J and K streets. Leroy Williams, 444-0646.



One smokin' success



Bruce Graner@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

Queens for Christ perform Saturday at the 12th annual Community Cookout at Terry Wayne Park. The Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association sponsored the cookout.

Community cookout lets residents have fun

Amy Sowder
 @PensacolaNewsJournal.com

The 12th annual Community Cookout on Saturday afternoon was not only hot, it was smokin'.

Barbecue smoke wafted through Terry Wayne Park as hundreds of local children and adults milled about the information booths, sat in the shade listening to the entertainment and munched on hot dogs and hamburgers.

Barefooted children bounced and squealed in the three air-filled attractions.

"I like doing flips because when I land, everything is upside down," said Juwan Salter, 7, as he slipped into his sneakers.

The cookout, sponsored by the Pensacola Commu-

nity Arts and Recreation Association, was a way to unite the community of families and businesses in a positive, drug-free, non-violent environment.

Organizer Leroy Williams said the event was bigger than ever, pointing to the addition of two jumping attractions and 22 vendors, compared with 10 vendors last year.

Williams said Hurricane Ivan tested the togetherness of the community.

"The only reason we survived was the unity we've shown, but we have to keep it going," Williams said.

Five Queens for Christ dance teammates let out a unified scream of delight as they emerged from the window of a fire-safety house designed with smoke

to simulate a fire.

"It's like a real fire," said Kuatera Ferguson, 13. "We touched a door knob because if it's hot, you don't go in there, and we had to stop, drop and roll."

People took fliers from booths staffed by Youth-Build, Sickle Cell Disease Association, Project H.O.P.E. and the University of West Florida.

Project H.O.P.E. crisis counselor Latanya Graphenreed said setting up a table at the cookout enabled those who still need hurricane-related help to come to her.

"People are getting jittery as the season approaches again, so we are counseling them, sharing how to prepare," Graphenreed said.

Whitney Thompson

opened the evening's entertainment with her first violin performance.

Whitney, 12, played the national anthem to a crowd who cheered in appreciation after her bow's last stroke.

"It was kind of scary, but halfway through it, I got into it," Whitney said.

Burning Bush, a hot hip-hop group of four Pensacola brothers with an enthusiastic message, incited some listeners to dance on the ballfield.

"Usually, with this many people coming together, a fight would break out," said Samuel "Crossbearer" Underwood, 20, who rapped with his brother, Titus "Wisdom Filla" Underwood. "But not here."



Cookout draws hungry crowds

There was plenty of barbecue, music and fun Saturday at Terry Wayne Park at the 12th annual Community Cookout.

LOCAL, 1C

She was just walking down
Pensacola and Ohio

"On your journey to success, always keep God first before all that you do; and give back to your community by reaching out and helping those who are less fortunate than you. This will ensure you continuous success in pursuing all your goals in life."



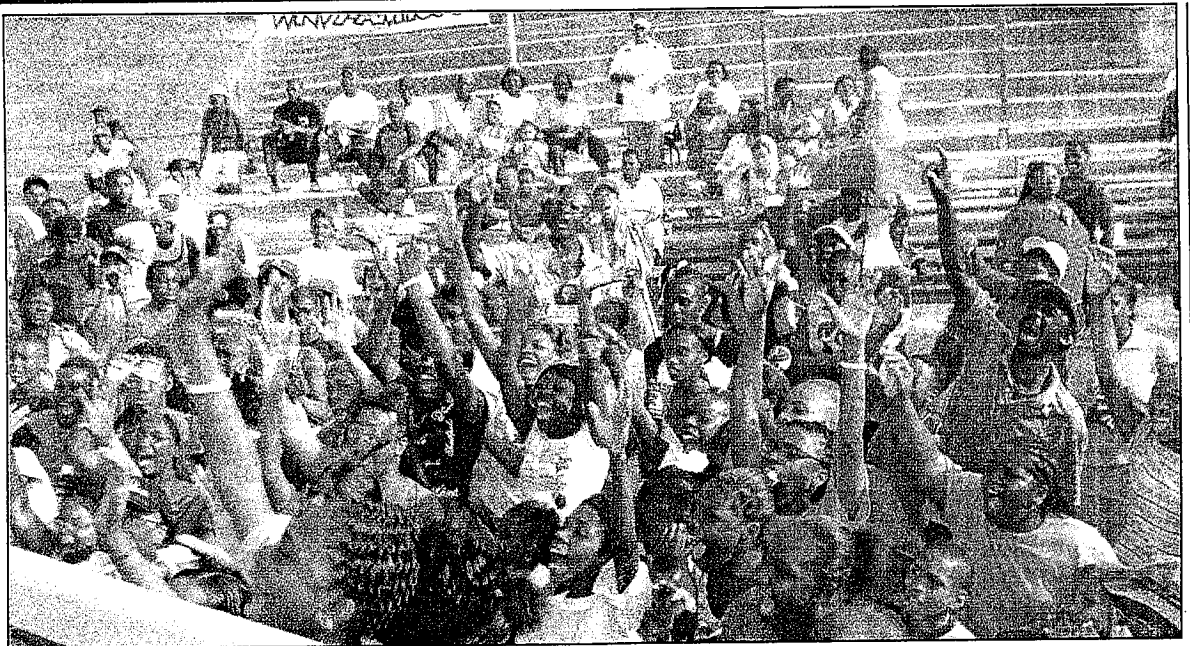
Williams

— Leroy Williams, 41, founder and president of Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association. PCARA's mission is to offer young people alternatives to drugs, violence and pregnancy.

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Clean, family fun focus of PCARA event

Many times community events start out with a bang but eventually fizzle as time elapses. However, for PCARA twelve years of hosting "The Big Cookout" has continued to garner support, increased community participation and bolster clean, family fun.

Saturday was no different. Despite sweltering heat and dry dust, PCARA's annual

event featured the aroma of bar-b-cue floating through the air, an unbelievable amount of entertainment, free food and various giveaways.

"I always have fun at this event. This is my third year in a row coming," said fifteen-year-old Lacy Turner.

The youth jumped around, clamored around the stage and participated in all the entertainment events. On the

other hand, parents and older event goers sat in the stands with umbrellas and enjoyed the event from afar.

"I have two children down there having a good time," commented Rebecca Kyle. "I know that they can have fun here without violence and witnessing other bad behaviors."

"We have grown tremendously. Last year we had ten

vendors to participate, and this year we have twenty-two," said event organizer Leroy Williams.

Vendors gave out a variety of information including AIDS awareness, education and sickle cell disease information.

"Our community suffered a lot because of Ivan. We have to pull together to survive," added Williams.

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Youth gala set for June 25th

PCARA to host Fifth Annual 'Youth Gospel Extravaganza'



Leroy Williams prepares youth for upcoming performances at Saenger Theatre.

Area youth often times face many challenges when it comes to showcasing their talents. However, for five consecutive years, Northwest Florida youth has been allowed to perform on one of the largest stages in Pensacola - the Saenger Theatre.

"We want to introduce our youth to all the benefits the performing arts have to offer," explained Leroy Williams, president of PCARA.

The extravaganza, sponsored by PCARA, will consist of praise dancers, instru-

mentalists, spiritual mimes, drill teams, gospel rappers, poetry readers, gospel choirs and soloists.

"This will be some our kids first time performing in front of such a large audience," added Williams.



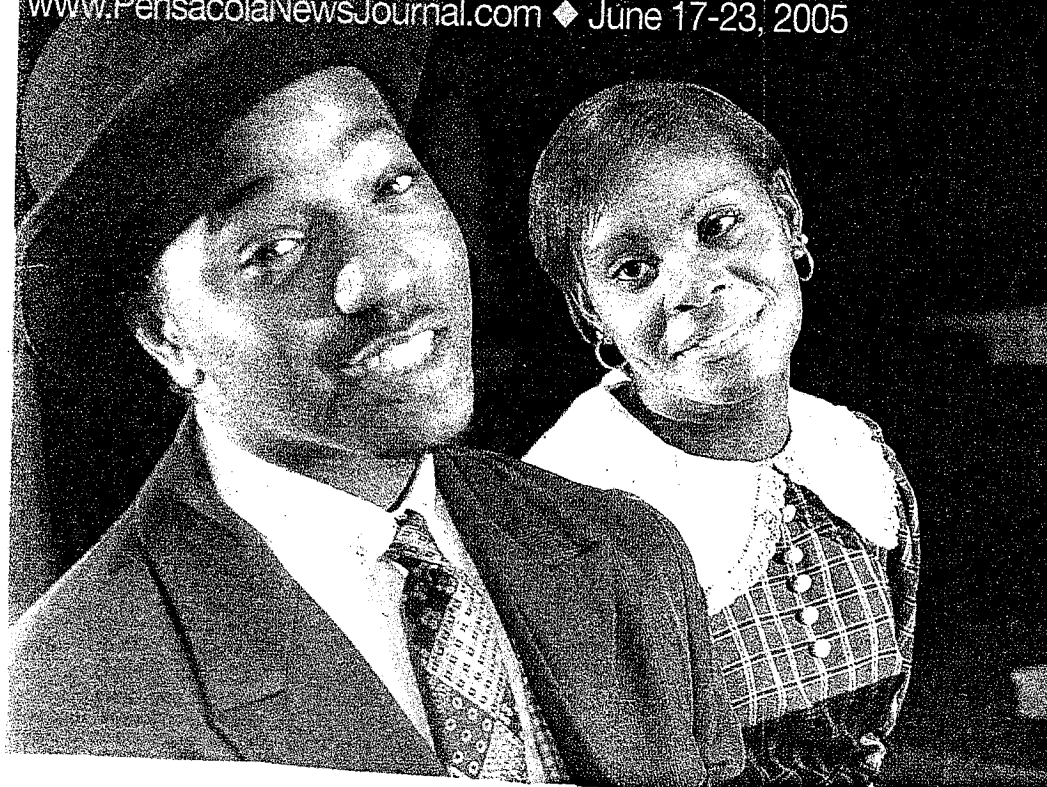
Blessed Children of Praise is one of twenty-nine groups to perform.

Want To Go

What
Youth Extravaganza
When
June 25 · 6pm
Where
Pensacola Saenger
Theatre

Weekender

www.PensacolaNewsJournal.com ♦ June 17-23, 2005



Weekender

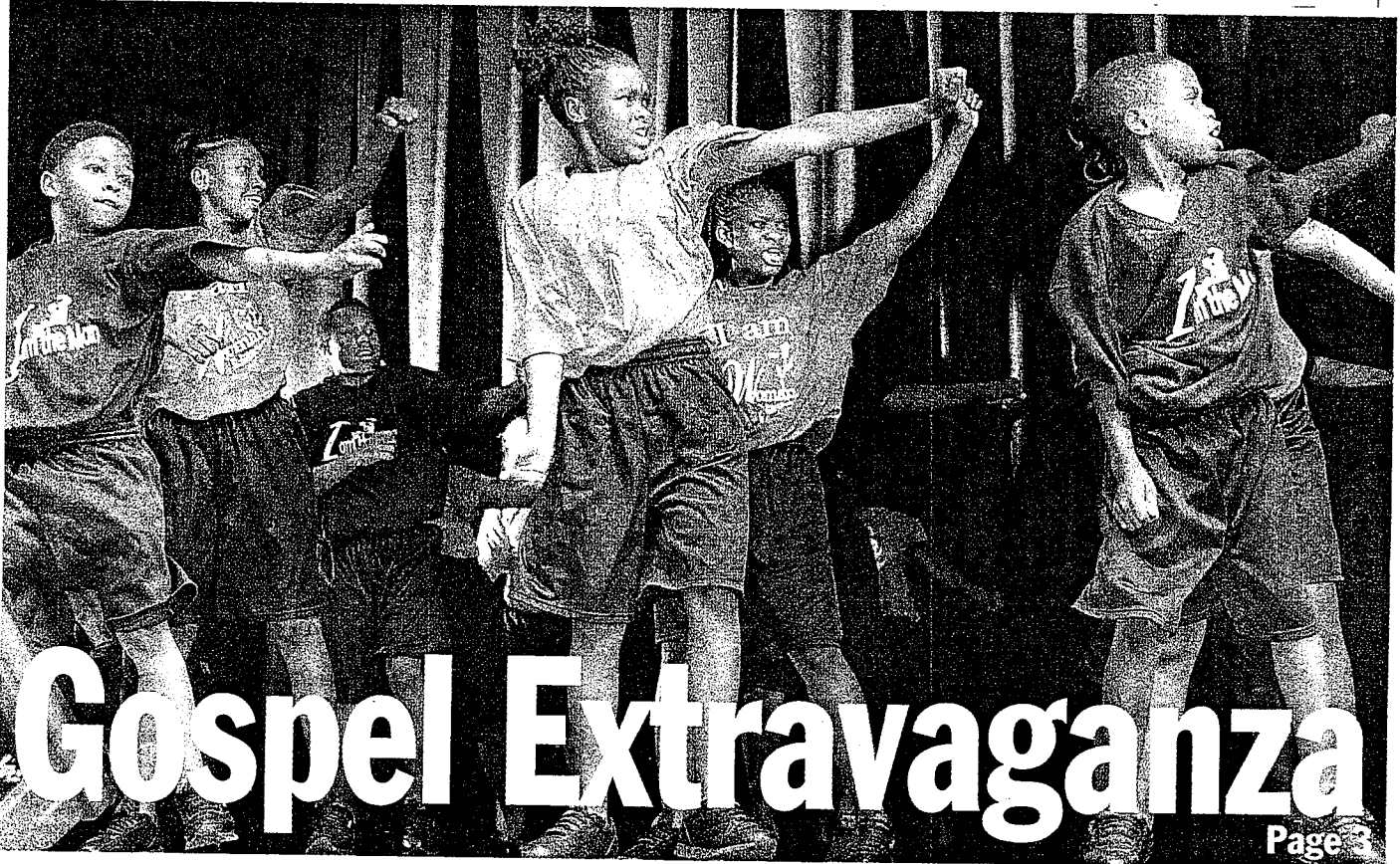
www.PensacolaNewsJournal.com ♦ June 24-30, 2005



Youth ready to show their faith

Youth from throughout Pensacola and surrounding communities will show off their performing skills Saturday at the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's fifth annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza.

WEEKENDER



Gospel Extravaganza

Page 3

Section C

PENSACOLA
**News
Journal**
www.PensacolaNewsJournal.com

LOCAL

SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2005

SATURDAY

Fifth annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza

6 p.m. Saturday. Aspiring young performers will show off their skills during the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association's fifth annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza. The event will showcase youth throughout Pensacola and surrounding communities. Tickets can be purchased at the Stage Right Christian Music Store in University Mall and the Saenger Theatre. \$8 advance; \$10 day of show. Saenger Theatre, 118 S. Palafox Place. 444-0646, 595-3880.

Breona Baker, 5, foreground, is a member of the Blessed Children of Praise and is performing in the Youth Gospel Extravaganza.
Bruce Graner@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

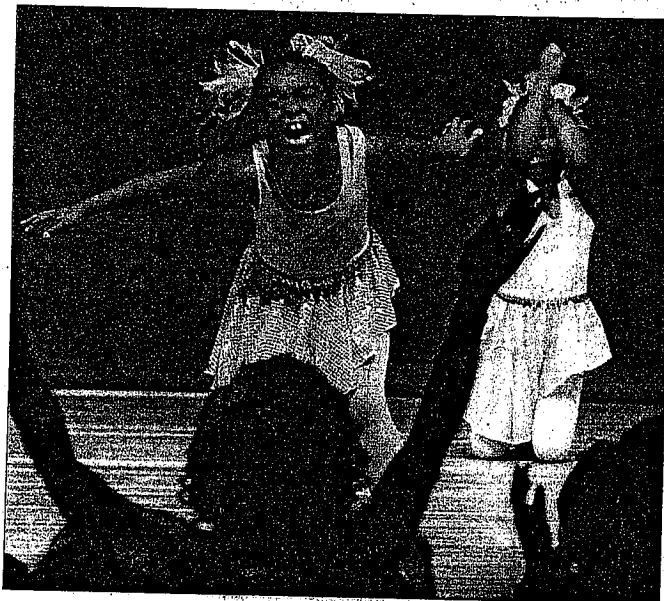


PENSACOLA News Journal

SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2005



A gospel extravaganza
LOCAL, 1C



Bruce Graner@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

The Mount Pilgrim Praise Angels evoke a response Saturday from the audience watching their praise dancing during the fifth annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza.

Youth show their spirit

Sean Smith
@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

A packed Saenger Theatre rocked, stomped and sang Saturday night during the fifth annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza.

About 145 children representing 28 groups — from the sweet violin sounds of Whitney Thompson to gospel singers, gospel rap groups and praise dancers — took the stage.

Leroy Williams, founder of PCARA, the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, was overwhelmed as he saw the crowd piling into the Saenger in downtown Pensacola.

They represented several area churches, all going to see children who had practiced their routines for months.

"We have some highly talented kids from all different churches coming together as one," Williams said. "We're going to let the kids show what

Want to go?

■ **WHEN:** Meets at 5:30 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday.

■ **WHERE:** The Student Center at Pensacola Junior College.

■ **CALL:** 444-0646.

■ **ONLINE:** www.pccraonline.com.

they can do."

Williams founded the non-profit association in 1987 as an all-volunteer organization offering young people alternatives to drugs, violence and pregnancy.

Williams, a professional playwright, produces plays to help fund the association's free after-school programs twice weekly at Pensacola Junior College. The group offers tutoring, seminars and classes in acting, singing, boxing, karate and building self-esteem.

"We are open to all kids," Williams said. "We give them a touch of professionalism, give them an opportunity to

take the big stage. We want to bring something positive into their lives."

Volunteer Tonya Green has seen the difference in her daughter, Tashara, an incoming sophomore at Woodham. Tashara performed in a praise-dancing group doing a hip-hop routine.

"(Williams) is such a positive role model for the kids," Tonya Green said. "They're nervous, but they've been working so hard. It's spiritual. It's all about God tonight."

Special guests violinist John Powell Jr. and gospel group Burning Bush launched the show.

By the time the pink pompadour dance routine of Blessed Children of Praise took the stage, the audience was on their feet.

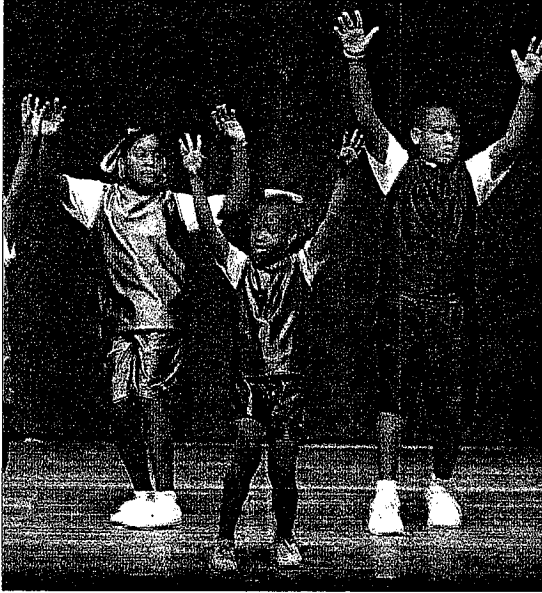
Emma Watts took four groups from Houser Memorial Baptist Church to perform.

"This is great motivation for the children. It gives them inspiration to do good things and to stay out of trouble," Watts said. "It shows people what these children are capable of doing."



Williams

Look what you missed



LEFT: The Sons & Daughters of Destiny from the New Dimensions Christian Center in Pensacola perform during the annual Youth Gospel Extravaganza on Saturday evening at the Saenger Theatre. About 145 children participated in the show, which was sponsored by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.

Playwright takes the national stage

Leroy Williams has made a name for himself throughout the Pensacola Bay Area as a local playwright, director, producer and performer.

Now, he's gained national recognition after his gospel stage play, "The Boogie Woogie Preacher," was chosen as the Best Play of the Year by the American Gospel Music Awards.

The prestigious and much-deserved award culminated many years of tireless efforts put in by Williams and his organization, the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, better known as PCARA.

For Williams, 41, the award validated his nearly 20 years of dedicated sacrifice and commitment as a workaholic local artist.

"It's like a confirmation that I'm doing the right thing," Williams said. "All I have to do is continue pressing on and drawing people to this ministry."

Williams, among artists and producers from the country of Kenya to California, accepted the off-Broadway award on Saturday at the Wings Theatre in New York.

As writer, director, producer and performer in the award-winning gospel comedy, Williams always believed that "The Boogie Woogie Preacher" was

one of his best productions. But he never imagined this comedic gospel play would win a national award.

"Certainly, this award helps get us notoriety," he said. "People can now familiarize themselves with what we do to help us become a household name."

The American Gospel Music Awards, says President Deborah Stewart, seeks to find tomorrow's gospel stars and give them the recognition and respect their music and performances deserve. A higher goal is to promote the unknown Christian artists to help them reach a higher level of success.

Since PCARA's inception in 1987, the nonprofit, all-volunteer organization has provided inspiring entertainment for Pensacola audiences and offered young people alternatives to drugs, violence and pregnancy.

The group primarily operates and survives on fund-raisers, donations and proceeds made through its productions and DVD sales.

Williams' short-term goals are to continue producing good plays and making previous productions available on DVD. He also wants to diversify his plays and his youth ministry by attracting other races to work with PCARA and perform in its local productions.

Williams hopes the recognition will increase appeal for his plays, enabling him to move performances from the Saenger Theatre to the bigger venues like the Pensacola Civic Center.

In the long term, Williams envisions PCARA acquiring its own state-of-the-art, 2,500-seat performing arts center, along with a 1,000-seat rehearsal hall.

Williams is driven by his ambition to continue saving lost souls through his gospel ministry.

"This is truly a blessing from God, and all I'm doing is giving back what God has given me," he said.

By building and gaining support here, Williams believes he can draw national attention to the Pensacola Bay Area by touching people's hearts, souls and minds through the gospel plays and performances.

Unlike some people who only dream and talk about doing something good and making a difference, Williams is doing both through PCARA and his gospel ministry.

Winning the award is validation of his good works and another positive step toward nationwide recognition and success.



REGINALD T. DOGAN

Reginald T. Dogan is assistant opinion editor for the News Journal. E-mail him at ReginaldTDogan@PensacolaNewsJournal.com.

'Boogie Woogie Preacher' wins award

Pensacola's original gospel stage play "The Boogie Woogie Preacher" was chosen "Best Play of the Year" at the American Gospel Music Awards during a ceremony that took place last weekend in New York City.

The play was written, produced and directed by Pensacola resident Leroy Williams and performed by the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association in February 2004 at the Saenger Theatre. Williams is the founder and president of PCARA, which offers educational and social

activities for area youth.

Williams, who attended the awards show, said he felt honored to be among so many talented writers and producers. "I was excited! For us to be considered among the elite was just awesome," he said.

The play is now available for purchase on DVD at www.boogiewoogiepreacher.com. Details: About PCARA, call 444-0646.



Williams

— Rebecca Ross
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'Boogie Woogie Preacher' receives national award



Leroy Williams (c), surrounded by hostesses, accepts the award for "Best Stage Play of The Year."

"The Boogie Woogie Preacher" was chosen The Best Stage Play of The Year by the American Gospel Music Awards. The play was written, produced and directed by Pensacola's Leroy Williams and performed by PCARA Productions. "This award helps us to become known around the nation so that when we start touring, people will come out and support us," said Williams who attended the awards ceremony last Saturday (July 23rd). The event was held off Broadway at the Wings Theatre located in New York City's Greenwich Village.

'Boogie Woogie Preacher!' AGMA Best Play of Year



Cast performs "The Boogie Woogie Preacher"

Last Saturday the American Gospel Music Awards (AGMA) announced "The Boogie Woogie Preacher" as 2005 Gospel Play of the Year at its annual awards presentation at the Wing's Theatre in New York.

Written, produced and directed by Leroy Williams, of Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association (PCARA), the play to sold-out Gulf Coast crowds last year.

However, Williams says he still thought winning was a long shot. "When you look at the other people that are nominated you feel 'my chances aren't there.' They were getting out of limousines, I was getting out of taxis... I have been so overwhelmed. To God be the glory," he says.

Williams, who also wrote popular stage-play "Holier Than Thou" is currently writing a third play. It's third year in exis-

Male Soloists

Andra Cross

Female Soloists

Queda Keith

Rappers/Hip Hop

Kenneth McGraw

Groups/Traditional

Contemporary

Provisions By God

International Artists

Emmanuel Jal

Jazz

Kevin Moore

Comedy

Coy Lasone

Artist of the Year

Gospel Fathaz

Video

Harold B (Clap 2 This)

Magazine

Gospel Today Magazine

Internet Sites

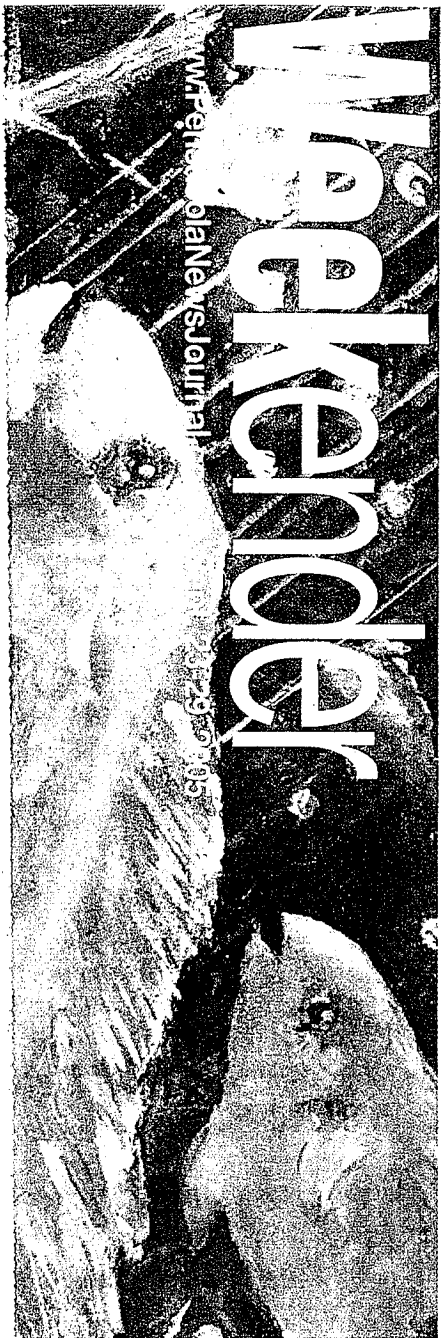
Gospel City

TV Programming

Lift Every Voice(Gerard Henry)

Spoken Word

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NEWS Journal

PENSACOLA

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2005



Seafood Fest

Pages 1, 5



PCARA's variety show, 5 and 12

SATURDAY



Dasia Wilson, left, and Tashara Green of the PCARA Faith Dancers rehearse for the "Reaching Out to Victims of Hurricane Katrina" show.

Bruce Graner@PensacolaNewsJournal.com

PCARA variety show

6 p.m. Saturday. The Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association will present a variety show, "Reaching Out to the Victims of Hurricane Katrina." The show will consist of singing and dancing. Donations will be accepted, and proceeds will be donated to benefit the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Free admission. Pensacola Junior College Student Center, 1000 College Blvd. 444-0646. For more, see page 12.

THE Independent Voice

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PCARA constantly finds ways to give back

Group entertains, feeds and provide gift card for 15 displaced families

by Al Henderson
Independent Voice staff writer

Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, affectionately known as PCARA in the Pensacola community, is becoming known world-wide for their gospel stage plays including 'The Boogie Woogie Preacher' which writer Leroy Williams won the American Gospel Award for playwright of the year. However, the organization's contributions to the community oftentimes go unnoticed. Not that the group would even desire accolades for such events as the drug-free 'Big Cookout' or its showcase of area youth talents through the 'Youth Extravaganza,' but fifteen families from New Orleans and Mississippi were eager to toot the organization's horn last Tuesday.

"The Pensacola community has been wonderful since we arrived," explained Lanae Manning who is an evacuee from New Orleans. "This event was really uplifting. Pensacola has really been a



From praise dancing to gospel rap, PCARA's honored guest were well entertained last Tuesday night by local youth.

Manning was one of fifteen families PCARA welcomed during their weekly Tuesday night meeting at PJC. The families were entertained by PCARA members, fed a hot meal and awarded \$100 gift certificates to Wal-Mart.

"This is a community effort," said Williams. "The community came together to do this for our guest. We want them to know that they are

welcome in our city and most importantly, we invite them to join the PCARA family."

"We will never forget what this group has done for us here tonight. The entertainment and fellowship uplifted our spirits, and for that we are very thankful," added Franco Libonade.

At their last meeting, PCARA members held a free performance and raised \$1,500 which was used to fund Tuesday's event.

OPINION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2005

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Mickey Johnson - Managing Editor
Carl Wernicke - Opinion Editor
Reginald T. Dogan - Assistant Opinion
Shella Reed - Newspaper in Education
J. Earle Bowden - Editor Emeritus

VIEWPOINT

Pensacola deserves Maritime Park

For 18 years I lived near the area proposed for the Community Maritime Park. Over the years, I have watched this part of the Pensacola community deteriorate as houses were torn down and became vacant lots.

I've watched what used to be very nice and well-built homes being replaced with cheap, unattractive duplexes. I've watched drugs, crime and violence infiltrate our community, causing honest, able and law-abiding citizens to lose faith and leave in disillusionment or remain in fear and dissatisfaction.

In too many cases, community centers have been torn down or left in disrepair. There remain very few recreational parks in the area for families and children to use and enjoy.

Over the years, leaders have promised us, primarily during elections time, to revitalize our community. However, very little progress has been made. But the Community Maritime Park will be a



LEROY E. WILLIAMS JR.
Leroy Eugene Williams Jr. is founder and president of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association.

promise kept.

The Maritime Park is the key to a very bright future for our community. The park will help filter out all of the negatives, and it will add a new meaning through a positive change.

The Maritime Park will not only bring more and better jobs to the area, but it also will enhance and improve our community. It will provide training for unskilled workers, education alternatives, prevention resources, recreational activi-

ties, performing arts and entertainment. It will beautify Pensacola's downtown waterfront, making it a must-see destination for locals and visitors who want to enjoy the open access and many amenities that the park will offer.

As the founder and president of the Pensacola Community Arts and Recreation Association, an alternative program for youths, I know how important it is to offer and provide opportunities and activities for young people.

The Community Maritime Park will be a positive asset not only for the Pensacola Bay Area but also for its young people who are yearning for and needing something new and beneficial to keep them occupied while in school and motivated to remain here after they graduate.

I say to every person who lives in Pensacola, please support the Community Maritime Park. Our community deserves it.