

King holiday events feature diversity

Marin City recalls civil rights leader with projects, talks and performances

By Carla Bova

IJ reporter

Messages of freedom, equality and social change rang out in Marin City yesterday through song, dance, artwork and poetry about the life and work of Martin Luther King Jr.

The festivities conveyed King's memorable plea for civic action by incorporating a community forum that kept with the day's theme, "A Day On, Not a Day Off."

Several hundred participants turned out for the sixth annual multicultural, family-oriented event hosted by the Marin County Grassroots Leadership Network, which promotes leadership and educational opportunities.

"It is not just about having a celebration of Martin Luther King Jr., it is a call to civic responsibility," said John Young, the network's executive director. "We all have to take some responsibility to make our community a better place. ... People need to be part of the effort to make things change."

The day kicked off with community beautification projects led by members of the Marin Conservation Corps. More than 40 volunteers of all ages participated in a cleanup effort around Marin City and in planting efforts at Bayside Elementary School in Sausalito and on Golden Gate National Recreation Area land on Alta Av-

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SERVICE: As part of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance, Treyvonn Isaiah, 6, plants bulbs with the help of Karen Zotter of the Marin Conservation Corps at Bayside Elementary School in Sausalito.

IJ photo/Frankie Frost

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enue, said Veronica Johnson, who is with the corps.

"The creation of this holiday has been about service," Johnson said. "One thing Martin Luther King believed was that everyone could serve."

About 100 people attended a community forum called "Diversity and Civic Participation for Social Equity," led by activist Marlene Jones, who has a doctorate in international multicultural education. She holds a professional appointment in the Social and Cultural Studies Department in the School of Humanities at Dominican University.

"We know Martin Luther King had a strong voice," Jones said. "We have not met the goals he set for us before his death. We haven't really achieved the dream."

Jones spoke of the importance of taking an active role in striving for social equity in Marin through social services, volunteering and fostering better working relationships among diverse groups.

"We need social change from the perspective of people of color themselves," Jones said. "That means self-determination."

To that end, Jones encouraged people to speak out during the forum and share ideas on ways to become active.

"Marin City is the most diverse city in the Bay Area," said resident Robert Fisher. "What needs to happen, in my view, is not that Marin City needs some change. It is the rest of the county that needs some change."

"One issue in people moving forward is self-esteem," said Nita Winter, a seven-year Marin City resident. "We need to work on that issue because when people feel good about themselves ... they can still move forward even when roadblocks are in the way."

Anita Franzi appeared on behalf of Rep. Lynn Woolsey, D-Petaluma, who was traveling to Washington, D.C., yesterday. She reminded the crowd of King's message to embrace diversity and not let physical, economic or racial differences be dividing forces.

"He stood for inclusion rather than exclusion," Franzi, a

Woolsey aide, said during the event that attracted several local candidates in the March 2 election. "We shall overcome, as Dr. Martin Luther King would say, but only if 'we' means all of us."

Marin County Supervisor Susan Adams said while the county will explore cutting services during tight fiscal times, it will continue to search for ways to help bring health services to low-income children.

"We will look at ways to survive and thrive within these dismal budgetary times," Adams said. "We need the community to help guide us when we make these decisions."

At noon, young and old crammed the Manzanita Recreation Center to standing-room-only capacity for performances that began with students of the Women Helping All People Scholastic Academy leading the crowd in song.

Kelly Thomas sang a song she wrote, "I Want to be Used by God," with a group called 100%, followed by D'George Hines, 13, who has performed at the event for the past five years. This year he sang the gospel song "Total Praise."

Chinese and Vietnamese lion dancers took the stage in their colorful costumes. Several youngsters with Performing Stars of Marin displayed various talents, including baton twirling and a narration of the history of Martin Luther King.

A creative youth arts contest included a drawing by Dominique Miller, a fifth-grader at Willow Creek Academy, of two girls of different races sharing a swing.

Three residents were honored with community leadership awards for their work in supporting families, Young said. The honorees were Donald Muhammad, Donnie Roary and Sharon Turner. Mary Morgan and Ray Menaster won community service awards.

"Dr. King carried the message that we are all people of God regardless of race, religion, creed, and today we continue to be reminded of his message," said Clint Bolden of San Leandro. "If we did not have this day, I am not sure people would take the time to remember that."

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