

# AAHM Sojourner

**Newsletter of the  
SPRINGFIELD AND CENTRAL ILLINOIS AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MUSEUM**

VOLUME 1, NO. 3

FALL 2017

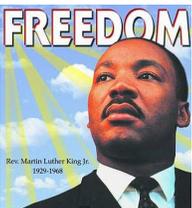
## INSIDE LOOK



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## Tickets On Sale through Oct.19

# **2017 Gala Around the Corner Don't miss this special evening . .**

The Museum is a hub-bub these days with preparations for the 2017 fundraising Gala to be held October 26 at the Wyndham Springfield City Centre. Co-chairs Ernestine Lawrence and Ocheng Jany are leading the effort that involves a myriad of details and coordination. Details are falling into place and everyone can look forward to a very enjoyable and worthwhile evening.

Adult tickets are \$50 each and \$500 for a table of 10. Student tickets are \$25. Tickets can be purchased from any board member or by calling the Museum at 391-6323. Tickets must be purchased by October 19 and will not be available at the door. We are grateful to our Gala Sponsors and Advertisers for supporting this fundraiser. Although the deadline has passed for advertisements in the program, donations will be gratefully accepted at any time.

This year's Gala theme of **Early African American Pioneers of Central Illinois** will be underscored by a new exhibit depicting the history of Springfield's early pioneers. Elizabeth Alexander and Patricia Davis have researched and produced the exhibit with financial support from the Sangamon County Historical Society. With the theme in mind, guests are invited to wear period costumes if they wish.

The evening will begin at 6 p.m. with a reception and silent auction of interesting and unique items, some perhaps suitable for holiday gift-giving.

Music will be provided by **The Central Illinois Jazz All Stars** featuring central Illinois' finest jazz recording artists and session players.

*Kevin Ellis – Bass, Dreaming In Colours, recording artist, session player*  
*Michael Scherer – Piano, Michael Scherer Project, recording artist, session player*  
*Shayla Logan – Saxophonist, session player and songstress*  
*Perry Rask – Saxophonist, Music Educator, Session Player and recording artist*  
*Frank Parker - Trumpet, session player and recording artist*  
*Steve Alexander – Drums, session player and recording artist*  
*Genres – Traditional jazz, contemporary jazz, funk/fusion jazz*

Dinner will begin at 7 p.m. with a menu of salad, a choice of falling-off-the-bone beef short ribs or asparagus risotto, cheese cake and coffee. Special entertainment will be provided by talented local artists.

The highlight of the evening will be the introduction of the Honorees of the 2017 Gala. These individuals were nominated and selected for their efforts in making positive changes in their communities. Honorees this year are: Jerrie Blakely, Pastor Samuel Hale, Brandon McFarland, Russell Moore III, Melessa Tyus, and Melverta Wilkins.

**See HONOREES, page 4**



Springfield and Central Illinois  
African American History Museum

### OUR MISSION

- \* We tell authentic stories about African-American life in Central Illinois, past and present, celebrating and sharing our history and culture and planning for the future.
- ★ We will do this through scholarship, oral histories, exhibits, partnerships, our board, our supporters and our friends.
- ★ We are and will be community builders.
- \* We recognize that our stories are at once unique but connected to those of other communities and we will support those interconnections.
- \* We will be integral to the cultural life of our area. We will partner with like-minded organizations.
- ★ We will be proactive in our community.
- ★ We will study and apply best-practices in business, scholarship and communication.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**AAHM website:** [spiaahm.org](http://spiaahm.org)  
**Address:** 1440 Monument Ave., Springfield, IL 62702  
**Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 301, Springfield, IL 62705  
**Telephone:** 217-391-6323  
**Toll free:** 877-757-2247  
**follow us on Facebook**

## A letter from AAHM President Doug King

Hello Friends,

This is an exciting and busy time at African American History Museum of Springfield and Central Illinois. We are in high-gear planning our annual fundraising Gala. For those who have never been involved in such events, the Gala is an all-consuming effort particularly for the Gala Committee Chairs. Hats off and highest praise to this year's co-chairs Ernestine Lawrence and Ocheng Janey. You can read more about the event and the outstanding individuals being honored there for their great contributions to Springfield and Central Illinois communities.



We are grateful for everyone who is involved in the Gala effort and to the many individuals, businesses and organizations who are supporting and participating in the event. Money raised at the Gala is a primary source of funds for all we do at the Museum.

Many other Museum events and activities are ongoing now as well. From an art opening, to an exhibit of the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor archaeological dig and our annual Old Fashion Tea, things are happening. Not only that, more is being planned for the future, including a year-long series of special events to honor the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Nell Clay is spearheading this wide-ranging collaborative effort and is welcoming all organizations to take part. The commemoration is an opportunity to reaffirm our collective goals of harmony, respect and understanding.

Finally, on behalf everyone at the Museum I offer condolences to Board Member Dr. Victoria Johnson and her family for the loss of Mr. Louis C. Johnson who passed away on August 7, 2017.

Regards,  
*Doug*

## Be an AAHM Museum Volunteer!

You are welcome and needed at the Museum. Our volunteers are engaged in many activities: greeting visitors at the door, providing Museum tours, researching new subjects, developing exhibits, and hosting social events. For those who love children, volunteers are needed to assist with events for youth. Whatever your interests or skills, there is sure to be a place for you at the Museum.



is the quarterly newsletter of the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, 1440 Monument Avenue, Springfield, Illinois.

Editor, Sue Massie; Design and Production, Vicky Whitaker.

# Dr. Carla Hayden, Librarian of Congress Welcomed to the African American History Museum

The AAHM opened its doors to Dr. Carla Hayden, the first woman and the first African-American to hold the title of Librarian of Congress. Hayden who often visited family in Springfield during childhood summers was appointed to the position by President Barack Obama, confirmed by Congress, and sworn in by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts on September 14, 2016.

"I'm from a race that had been forbidden to learn how to read," she noted while describing her love of libraries and reading and her childhood visits to the Springfield Library. Now at the helm of the largest library in the world she outlined ambitious goals including opportunities to collaborate with the AAHM. U.S. Representative Rodney Davis accompanied Dr. Hayden along with Springfield Mayor Jim Langfelder and State Representative Tim Butler.

*Right: Dr. Hayden with AAHM past-president Jerrie Blakely*



## On the Road: Community Collaboration and Museum Development

Board members and other volunteers are involved in the community, collaborating with other organizations and taking advantage of the many opportunities in our own home town.

- Members attended a grant workshop offered by University of Illinois/Springfield to learn how to utilize a new system that can screen and identify grant opportunities most closely aligned with organizational needs.
- Others participated in the Volunteer Open House at the IL State Museum and Old State Capitol. The two afternoon events were coordinated by the State Historic Sites that encouraged their partners throughout the city to participate.
- Museum members participated in the Cemetery Walk at Oak Ridge Cemetery. Organized by the Sangamon County Historical Society, this free event featured impersonators of historic figures buried at the cemetery. The AAHM sold snacks and books alongside the Lincoln Memorial Association that sold drinks.



- The AAHM recently established the "African American Museum Fund" with the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln. Funds earmarked for eventual acquisition of a permanent facility are invested to grow. Members and other donors can make deposits to the new fund, all helping to move the Museum closer to the goal of owning its own facility.

## The Joy of Giving

How heartwarming it is to be part of the Springfield and Central Illinois community where people are so thoughtful and generous. We sincerely thank the following:

**Elaine Hoff** for a large punch bowl and cups for the Museum's many receptions

**Dick Hart** for permission to reprint five books he has written about African Americans in Springfield

An **anonymous donor** who paid for printing Hart's books now available for purchase at the Museum

**Steve Alexander** for donating professional DJ and technical services plus much more

**Jenni Dahl and Roger Powers** for establishing and maintaining the Museum Data Base and managing the Web site

## AAHM Wish List

Sometimes people would rather give gifts instead of money as a donation. For those who love giving presents, there are always items needed at the Museum. These are some of them. Except for supplies, please call when you decide to give a gift, to get the particulars and to avoid duplications. 217-391-6323.

20# Copy paper, approx. \$40/case

Other office supplies

Heavy-duty adjustable hand truck/dolly, approx. \$75

Thermal Laminator, approx. \$75

Projector, approx. \$600

**As always we thank you for your support and thank you for thinking of us.**

## HONOREES from page 1



Jerrie L. Blakely, a native of Grand Rapids, MI, was a longtime resident of Chicago before moving to Springfield in 1985. Blakely received an Associate's degree from Malcolm X College and a BA from Roosevelt University, both in Chicago. For over 40 years she has been active in community service, political and civil rights and education. She was an aid to candidates including Congressman Danny Davis, IL State Rep. Arthur Turner and the late Mayor Harold Washington. Blakely is a founder of the AAHM and served as President through the critical time of building the museum's infrastructure. Retired from IL Dept. of Transportation in 2002, Jerrie continues working to strengthen her community and all who cross her path.

Rev. Samuel W. Hale Sr. is a native of Chicago and grew up in Decatur graduating from Stephen Decatur High School in 1960. Rev. Hale received a BA from the American Baptist College in Nashville, TN, and a Masters of Divinity Degree from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. In 1984, he began as the 33<sup>rd</sup> pastor of the historic Zion Baptist Church of Springfield, the third oldest African American church in Illinois. Rev. Hale has been active in organizations as Director of Phoenix Project, founder of Helping Hands, the NAACP Alternative School Program, Director of National Baptist Convention Summer Student Internship Program and others. He has authored Christian books and supported the AAHM.



Brandon McFarland is a native of Urbana and attended Kankakee Community College and Grand Valley State University in MI. McFarland dedicates himself to his community as an Assistant Teacher at Dr. Preston L. Williams Elementary School and as a baseball coach for middle and high school students. He encourages and instills in his students the values of self-determination, leadership, integrity and appreciation of every individual's culture. He accomplishes much of this with poetry, rap and lyrics in a professional and approachable manner. As a baseball coach, he teaches middle and high school students the importance of teamwork, school and family. McFarland is an inspiration to those around him, especially to the youth that he works with every day.



Meleesa Tyus is a middle school counselor in the Decatur Public Schools. Tyus started a mentoring program in 2005 for middle school girls called **Lunch Bunch**. The program mentored students during their lunch break, encouraging and listening to their concerns about life, school and their future. After successfully leading Lunch Bunch for eight years, Tyus became a central office administrator and was privileged to be trained in restorative justice peace circles. Peace circles provide a safe place for people to express questions and concerns and to speak in a confidential setting about home, school and life. Tyus continues to mentor and encourage many of her former middle school students at her church.



Melverta Wilkins is a longtime resident of Decatur, IL. In 2013, Wilkins began **Sista Girls and Friends**, a volunteer mentoring program for women and girls in the city. The program serves primarily African American girls through activities and relationships that foster self-esteem, leadership, health, character building and goal setting. A **PRESTIGE** segment of the program focuses on school-aged girls and strives to instill **Purity, Respect, Education, Sophistication, Tone, Integrity, Greatness and Excellence** through pairing the girls with motivated, successful community leaders who help position them for success. According to Wilkins' husband Tony, "Melverta wants to show the girls that they are somebody and can accomplish great things."

Russell Moore, III is a Springfield resident, graduating from Springfield High School in 2017. Moore is very involved in the community as president and treasurer of Sigma Beta Club of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. and 2017 mayor-elect of the American Legion's Illinois Boys State. Moore provided countless volunteer hours to the Salvation Army, JC Penny, Target and St. John's Breadline. He tutored 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at The Outlet. In 2016 and 2017 Moore was a U.S Colored Troop re-enactor and guide at the Lincoln Home Site. He is now studying computer programming at Lincoln Land Community College and plans to attain a Computer Science or Engineering degree from the University of Illinois/UC.



## Rosenwald Film Debut Draws Crowd

Hundreds of people flocked into the Union Baptist Church on July 15 to view the film, "Rosenwald, the Remarkable Story of a Jewish Partnership with African American Communities." Julius Rosenwald who lived in Springfield as a boy went on to become the owner of Sears Corporation, amassing great wealth during the early 1900s. Rosenwald used his money – all of it - to assist African Americans. At the time through much of the South, conditions for African Americans were unconscionable. African Americans were not allowed in YMCAs – Rosenwald built YMCAs for black people. African Americans were not provided decent schools – Rosenwald instituted a financial program to build 5,300 schools for black children. Even the most talented African Americans had little chance of success – Rosenwald supported the likes of Marion Anderson, Maya Angelou, Miles Davis, and Langston Hughes. Airing of the film was made possible through a collaboration of Jewish and African American organizations in the city. This film is to be available soon for purchase.

## Artist Kas King Hosts Exhibition

On September 16, artist Kas King, a native of Springfield, brought his recent work for a lively public exhibition at the Museum. King's multi-media pieces exude emotion and understanding of day-to-day life. His work is captivating and we look forward to following the progress of this talented young artist.

## Race Riot Archaeology

Archeologists presented information about Springfield's 1908 Race Riot gleaned from recent excavations and research. Floyd Mansberger and Chris Stratton from Fever River Research in Springfield discussed findings from the riot-destroyed area that including many artifacts. Poster exhibits are on display at the Museum.



**Summer Highlights**

## Historic Eastside Study

A study of the historic black district on the city's east side was recently announced. Funded by the Department of Interior, the study will involve in-depth research and documentation of the area bounded on the west by 10<sup>th</sup> Street, on the east by 19<sup>th</sup> and Wirt Streets, on the south by South Grand Avenue and Brown Street, and on the north by Madison Street and Clear Lake Avenue. The study focuses on National Register eligibility criteria including historic events, lives of residents, and distinctive architecture. Fever River researchers and archeologists will develop the study which involves community outreach and public meetings.

## Freedom Celebration

This year's "Old Fashion Tea: Celebrating the Spirit of Freedom" on Sept. 23 was held inside the Museum as a respite from unseasonably hot weather. Members and friends decorated tables, sampled food and enjoyed sharecropper-reenactor Minister O. Logan and a Sing Along led by Dr. Ann Joseph, Debra Richards and Eva Mitchell. Table sponsors told about the history of items on their table. Zion Baptist Church won the best decorated table award and the League of Women Voters of the Springfield Area won the award for the most contributions. If there had been an award for most historic presentation of the table it would have been won by Faith Temple AME Church for their doilies, depression era tea settings and tea cakes. Spicy iced tea was served in remembrance of the late Board member Babs Dickerman. Museum past-president Jerrie Blakely closed with, "Thanks to all who supported the tea and we'll be looking for you next year."

# Coming Attractions

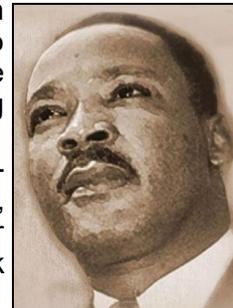
## “MLK50” COMMUNITY HONORS THE MEMORY OF DR. KING

Next meeting: 5:30 p.m. Thursday, October 19 at the Museum

April 4, 2018 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The AAHM and other local organizations are working together to plan commemorative events. AAHM program coordinator Nell Clay explained, “We want to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. King’s assassination by celebrating his life.”

Meetings are being held regularly to discuss programs and set schedules. Organizations can sponsor their own events or join with others in hosting programs, events, and activities. Individuals can help with particular programs or assist with other needs. For information check the AAHM website at [www.spiaahm.org](http://www.spiaahm.org) and Facebook page. Call Nell Clay for more information at 217.638.5755.

Activities are in various phases of development and others are still being added. More information will be provided.



### OCTOBER 2017

- **Springfield Race Unity Committee** begins 21<sup>st</sup> Century after-school program at Jefferson Middle School to address the topics of Race Unity through activities, instruction and conversation. Begins October 11 from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. each Tuesday and Thursday. Contact Delores Martin at 553-1124 to volunteer.
- **Springfield Race Unity Committee** leads Jefferson Middle School students in making a Visions of Unity quilt that will later be displayed during a program at the school.
- The **James Weldon Johnson Study Guild** hosts a discussion about the book written by Dr. King, *The Measure of a Man*. The discussion is at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, October 14 at the Schnucks Montvale Meeting Room, 2801 Chatham Road, Springfield, IL. All are welcome. Call 217-785-9075 for more information.
- **AAHM** hosts its 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala. 5 p.m. Thursday, October 26 at the Wyndham Springfield City Centre, tickets are \$50 from any board member or by calling 217.391.6323.

### DECEMBER 2017

- **African American History Museum** Grand Opening of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. exhibit. Opening and Reception December 1 at 5:30 p.m.

### JANUARY 2018

- **Frontiers International** hosts the Dr. Martin Luther King Breakfast on January 15 at the Wyndham Springfield City Centre, 700 E. Adams, Springfield, IL. Tickets are \$25 from any member or by calling Richard Bowen at 217.725.2626 (cell) or 217.529.0767 (hm.)
- The **Ministerial Alliance** sponsors the MLK Writing Competition January 14.
- The **NAACP** leads its annual Unity March on January 15 beginning at noon from Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church to Pleasant Grove Baptist Church.

### FEBRUARY 2018

- Coalition of **AAHM, UIS, Bicentennial Commission** and others lead Race & Reconciliation program.

### MARCH 2018

- **AAHM** celebrates women in the civil rights movement. 12:34 p.m. Saturday, March 3, includes luncheon and program.
- **Hoogland Center of Springfield** presents “All the Way,” a play that begins as LBJ becomes President and deals with pressure from Dr. King and other activists to pass the Civil Right Act. Performances on March 2, 3, 4 and 9, 10, 11.

### APRIL 2018

- **I-Magic Nation** leads a Reading and Discussion of Dr. King’s speeches. April 7 at 1 p.m., April 10 at 10 a.m. At the Union Baptist Church.
- **Robert Moore**, retired US Marshall, leads a workshop/discussion on Non-violence and Activism. Tentative date set for April 19, 2018. Local youth groups Boys and Girls Club, the Outlet and others will be involved.

### MAY 2018

- Film Series coordinated by Kamau Kemayo and Vinnie Gupta.

### OCTOBER 2018

- The **Springfield Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity** hosts a reading and program around the speech Dr. King made in Springfield on October 7, 1965.

# Calendar of Events

**MUSEUM HOURS: TUESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, NOON TO 4 P.M.; SATURDAYS, 10 A.M. TO 5 P.M.**



**Sunday, October 1: "Echoes of Yesteryear, A Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery,"** Noon to 4 p.m. The Museum participates with the Sangamon County Historical Society to bring back interesting individuals interred at the cemetery with live portrayals by costumed actors. Two actors participating in the event are former Museum Board members Patricia and Robert Davis who will portray Jameson Jenkins and his wife Elizabeth. This event is free to the public. Snacks will be offered for sale.

**Saturday, October 14, 11:30 a.m.** The **James Weldon Johnson Study Guild** hosts a discussion about the book written by Dr. King, ***The Measure of a Man***. Held at the Schnucks Montvale Meeting Room, 2801 Chatham Road, Springfield, IL. All are welcome. Call 217-785-9075 for more information.



**Thursday, October 26: 6th Annual AAHM Gala Banquet** 6 p.m. (reception), 7 p.m. dinner. Wyndham Springfield City Centre. This year's theme will focus on "*Early African American Pioneers of Central Illinois*" and will include live music and entertainment, a silent auction, and recognition of community members. For ticket information, see page 1.

**Thursday November 21: A Greek Christmas.** Sororities and fraternities come together to celebrate Christmas at the Museum and enjoy a little friendly tree-decorating competition. Organizations may call the Museum for more information.

**Saturday, December 9, 1 p.m. to 4p.m. An Historic Christmas.** The Museum joins historic sites throughout the city in opening their doors to the community. All are welcome to come enjoy crafts for children and adults, refreshments and holiday cheer.

**Tuesday through Saturday, December 26-30: Kwanzaa Celebration.** The African American tradition of celebrating the new year will be enjoyed by all.

Springfield and Central Illinois  
African American History Museum  
P.O. Box 301  
Springfield, IL 62705-0301



## MEMBERSHIP

Members receive membership cards, certificates of membership, and museum communications. Members at the Sustaining level and above also receive invitations to previews, grand openings and special VIP events.

### Membership Categories

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$ 25   | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$100-\$199                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$ 50       | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$200-\$499                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth/student \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing \$500-\$999  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior \$20        | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member \$1,000 <i>includes free lifetime admission.</i> |

Business Member \$500-\$999 (includes business listing at museum events)

I would like to pay now for three years of membership . AMOUNT enclosed )\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, state, zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Your check should be made payable to the African American History Museum of Springfield and Central Illinois (AAHM) , P.O. Box 301, Springfield, IL 62705-0301