



The Journey

Moving toward a stronger and more inclusive community
The Newsletter of the Buffalo Urban League

A Message from the President

Happy New Year and welcome to the first edition of the Buffalo Urban League’s newsletter, “*The Journey . . . Moving toward a stronger and more inclusive community.*” We are excited to have another means of staying in touch with you – sharing information, addressing issues, finding solutions – all to make a positive impact on the lives of each member of our community.

This issue of *The Journey* is focused on the history and current programs and services of the Buffalo Urban League. Coming events and activities are highlighted and we encourage your participation. Your feedback is appreciated as are your suggestions. In order for us to continue to improve this newsletter, please make your needs known to us so we can be responsive to your needs.

Our programs have accomplished much in this past year:

- Our Family Preservation division provided services for 258 families involving 711 children.
- Foster care placement of 825 children of 325 families was prevented.
- Foster care and adoption services were provided to 350 families and children.
- Over 300 youth, who were provided educational services, met regent standards towards high school graduation. This included 69 high school graduates receiving scholarships to support their college education.
- Housing services were provided to 600 individuals and households.
- Career guidance and placement services assisted 276 individuals in obtaining employment.



Brenda W. McDuffie
 President & CEO

As 2006 has begun, we look forward to strengthening these services and continuing to respond to the growing socioeconomic need throughout our community. With high hopes and expectations of your support, the Buffalo Urban League will make this journey one that moves everyone in our community toward a better future.

Brenda

The Gala

Certainly the highlight of this past fall was our Gala. We were delighted to have Marc Morial, the President of the National Urban League, as our keynote speaker. Byron Brown, Buffalo’s new Mayor, was also in attendance with his family.



Marc Morial,
 NUL President

It was truly a magical night, filled with the warmhearted people of Western New York who joined in celebrating the wonderful mission accomplishments of the Buffalo Urban League.

Please mark your calendars for our coming Gala to be held on **November 18th, 2006**. It will be as extraordinary as it always has been.

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Family Preservation & Support

If you've read the newspaper lately, you know that our community faces increasing challenges of preventing child abuse and neglect.

Our Preventive Services division provides family-focused, home-based resources to families with children considered to be "at risk" for potential or confirmed abuse or neglect.

Family re-unification services are also given to children and parents who are separated by foster care. Our services include crisis intervention, counseling and parenting instruction – all the time working directly with the family in their home. We also connect people to vital community services such as domestic violence counseling, emergency food pantries, employment services, substance abuse treatment, legal services, housing, medical care and mental health and educational services.

In 2005, the Buffalo Urban League's Preventive Services program worked with 258 families and 711 children. More than 90% of these children avoided foster care placement and were able to be maintained safely within their family home or were returned to their families from foster care. Preventive Services is a proven way to preserve and strengthen families in our community.



The Urban League Radio Program

The Buffalo Urban League has an exciting new radio program, broadcasting on WUFQ 1080 AM.

It airs on every other Thursday from 11 a.m. till noon.

Tune in on these dates to hear our President and CEO Brenda W. McDuffie share information about the League's workings. Call-in conversations (837-1112) are welcomed.



2006 Show Schedule:

1/12 & 1/26
2/9 & 2/23
3/9 & 3/23
4/6 & 4/20
5/4 & 5/18
6/1 & 6/15
6/29 & 7/13
7/27 & 8/10
8/24 & 9/7
9/21 & 10/5
10/19 & 11/02
11/16 & 11/30
12/14 & 12/28

Senior Services

The most beautiful people in the Buffalo-Niagara Region frequent our 86 Pine Street facility. The Buffalo Urban League's Senior Services Program makes it possible for our community's seniors to continue to live independently as we support them with their basic life necessities. For nearly 80 years, the Buffalo Urban League has provided services for our senior population in the Ellicott District of Buffalo. Last year, over 300 seniors benefited from an array of comprehensive, multi-faceted and specialized program services.

The Telephone Assurance Program – (TAP) provides a daily personal phone follow-up network of caring volunteers and staff. TAP provides a lifeline of companionship to individuals who may be home bound, or have few opportunities for social engagement and mobility. During the past year, nearly 3,700 support services calls were made to seniors.

Nutrition And Wellness Counseling Program – In an effort to promote wellness and healthy lifestyles for seniors, the



Buffalo Urban League offers a host of health-related services including blood pressure screening twice a week, monthly nutritional workshops, exercise and fitness

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Housing & Community Development

In this past year, our Housing & Community Development staff have assisted over 600 individuals with these services:

- Classes on Basic Financial Literacy, Money Flow and Asset Creation, Budgeting and Setting Goals, Credit and Debt Management, Avoiding Predatory Lending, Homeownership and Fair Housing laws related to Mortgage Lending & Discrimination
- Mortgage Intervention & Emergency Assistance
- Counseling & Legal Services

Every day, our staff helps people escape from predatory loans, mortgage fraud and abuse.

One day, the P family was visited by a door-to-door salesman from a window company to do home improvements. This predatory salesperson got the family shackled with a frightfully high home equity loan. After our staff intervened, the loan officers of the bank finally listened and understood the household's predicament. We made sure that this family didn't remain hopelessly trapped in their financial circumstance.



Buffalo Urban League's Minority Housing Fair at the Hyatt Hotel

The H. family had just signed on their new mortgage, only to find that their family attorney had overlooked the fact that the home's seller was two years behind in property taxes. The Buffalo Urban League staff helped them get the information they needed to avoid paying penalties and begin their mortgage payments.

When Ms. L., a single-head-of-household individual, had secured her first mortgage, she had held the same full time career job for seven years. When her position was unexpectedly reduced to a lower paying one, her accumulated savings eroded because of the medical and child-care expenses of her "special needs" child. When she contacted the Buffalo Urban League's Housing Division for intervention, her mortgage was in danger of foreclosure. After finding a way out of her situation, she said:

"The Buffalo Urban League helped me to secure a Subordinate Note. They also taught me about the choices I have to help me take action with the missed payments. I am finally able to resume my normal monthly payments. A special thanks to my counselor for the time she spent helping me. Thank you."

Whatever your mortgage and home-buying or even apartment rental search needs might be, we are here to help you avoid the pitfalls.

Seniors *(continued)*

training and information on topics such as diabetes, cholesterol and flu vaccine availability.

Group Dining – On weekdays, our seniors are served a well balanced, nutritious meal during the noon hour. Communal dining provides seniors with a great opportunity for socialization and fellowship. During the past year, over 5,000 meals were served as a part of the group dining program.

Transportation Assistance

– To ensure that seniors have

a safe, reliable and convenient transportation network to medical and business appointments, the Buffalo Urban League provides nearly 150 transports each year.

Food Distribution Program

– Every Friday, food baskets are provided to seniors as a part of the Buffalo Urban League's Food Pantry Program. During the past year, nearly 1,200 bags of groceries were distributed. These lunch bags often bridge the nutritional gaps that seniors have when living on fixed or limited incomes.

Form Completion Assistance– To better help seniors navigate the maze of intricate government forms, we offer assistance in completing them.

The Buffalo Urban League Senior Services have been strategically supported by the ongoing partnerships with the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, Wegmans, BJ's Wholesale, and the Food Bank of Western New York. We have been particularly blessed by Shiloh Housing Corporation's generosity in letting us use the Pine Street facility.

Our History

The Buffalo Urban League was established in 1927 by citizens who were passionately committed to address the employment, housing and social needs of African-Americans. With the generous funding of Mrs. Alfred H. Schoelkopf, the Buffalo Urban League began in a four room suite of offices located at 357 William Street. William L. Evans, Executive Director and Theresa Greene were the initial administrators.

Throughout these years, the Buffalo Urban League has provided many services for underserved individuals of all ethnicities. The agency has been a stalwart advocate for better racial understanding and relations in the region. Through our scholarship funding, we've made substantial contributions to the college educations of hundreds of our region's students. We have remained on the forefront of providing supplemental educational services for youth and adults. Our earlier apprenticeship programs provided young women and men with new avenues for achieving their career goals. In spite of depressed economic conditions and the city experiencing the highest unemployment rate in the State, our Employment Division works in partnership with Buffalo Employment and Training



Center in helping individuals find employment. We have regularly been involved with business, industry and social service leaders in addressing poverty, unemployment and family preservation services. The Buffalo Urban League is a licensed Adoption Agency. We have earned an impressive reputation in our advocacy for home buyers.

The League has maintained five locations in Buffalo for achieving its mission goals. Whether our programs and services have directly addressed youth, senior citizens, single individuals or entire families, the Buffalo Urban League has grown and expanded its services to help thousands find solutions to problems and genuinely improve their lives. The Buffalo Urban League has thrived because of its stellar leadership through the years. From its earliest years when its work was guided by a handful of kind and committed founders to today, under the inspired and visionary leadership of President and CEO Brenda W. McDuffie, we have been here for you. We are your Buffalo Urban League. Our history, combined with that of the over 100 affiliates across our country, comprises a shared history. Together we stand tall and move into the future with dignity and compassion – mindful that we continue to make a genuine difference for the better. For a more in-depth account of our history, see our website at: <http://www.buffalourbanleague.org>.

Coming Events

Black Family Technology Awareness Evening

February 15, 2006 – 6-9 p.m.

The event will be held again at the Educational Opportunity Center at 465 Washington Street in Buffalo. Numerous seminars, open to the public, attempt to remove the digital divide by sharing information and access to the most popular uses of computer technology.

The topics and times of each seminar are listed at: <http://buffalourbanleague.org/BFTA.html> or you may contact the Buffalo Urban League to reserve your place by calling: (716) 854-7625.



Taste of Soul 2006 Cooking Competition

February 25, 2006 – Noon - 3 p.m.

Been waiting for the opportunity to present your best cooking and support the Buffalo community? Well, your time has come! To salute Black History Month, the Buffalo Urban League, with Tops Markets, proudly presents: "Taste of Soul" 2006 Cooking Competition. The event will be held at the Canisius College Student Center in Buffalo. Competition is welcomed in the categories of Entrees & Desserts. Applications are available on our website at: www.buffalourbanleague.org/TasteOfSoul/TasteOfSoul.html or by calling (716) 854-7625.



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Adoption & Foster Care

The staff of the Buffalo Urban League's Community Alliance for Minority and Multi-Needs Adoption Program (CAMMAP), and Each One Touch One (EOTO) Foster Care Program believes that all children have a right to a loving family. For that to happen, the household must be a stable, healthy and safe environment. The diverse problems confronting families today, however, are eroding parent's coping skills, changing family dynamics and causing the breakdown of the family unit. This results in children entering foster care.



Foster Care

The Each One, Touch One Foster Care Program provides temporary out-of-home care in licensed foster homes to children removed from their homes because of abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment by their parents or

guardians. Children, who have special needs, often have to wait longer to join a permanent, safe and nurturing household.

To provide help in children's transitions, we find and train families for foster care. Because of state regulations and the general complexity of finding and supporting good foster



care households, we provide counseling, training, mediation, respite provisions and supervised visitations for both children, birth parents and foster parents. Because of our commitment to strengthen families and the surrounding community, we try to enable children to return home to their birth parents, relatives or guardians as soon as possible. Happily, our Foster Care Program has helped forty foster parents and approximately sixty children in the last year.



Adoption

The Buffalo Urban League is also a fully certified adoption agency, providing a full range of services that reduce the number of children awaiting adoption. The program recruits, trains and certifies parents who are interested in adopting children of all ages. Our training focuses specifically on the needs of older children, sibling groups, children of color and children with physical, developmental and mental challenges. CAMMAP's priority is to certify homes that will provide a stable, safe, loving and positive home environment for waiting children. The adoption services include parent training, pre and post placement services, peer support and placement supervision. In doing so, our staff maintains the highest sensitivity, characterized by non-judgmental understanding and acceptance of cultural differences. During 2005, Buffalo Urban League's Adoption Program has provided adoption services to 350 families and children.

Coming Events *(continued)*

2006 College Scholarships

Applications being accepted now through April 28th, 2006

The Buffalo Urban League, Inc. awards scholarships to graduating high school students. Workshops to help students in the application process are available. The application may be obtained from our website at <http://buffalourbanleague.org/Scholarships.html> or by calling the Buffalo Urban League at (716) 854-7625.



Urban League Scholarship Golf Event

June 5, 2006

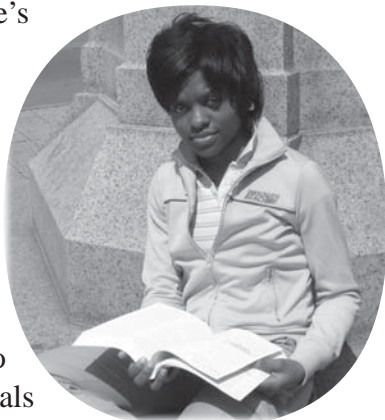
The event is held at River Oaks Golf Club on Grand Island with proceeds benefitting the Buffalo Urban League Scholarship Program. Registration forms are available on our website at: <http://buffalourbanleague.org/ScholarshipGolfTournament.html> or by calling (716) 854-7625.



Continued on page 6 – See “Coming Events”

Employment Transition Services

The Buffalo Urban League's Employment Transition Services assists individuals in their employment transitions. Our services include skills assessment, pre-employment counseling, career networking, job listings and job referrals to employers. 1,405 individuals have benefited from pre-employment services with 276 directly entering employment and 750 registering for upgrade opportunities with premier companies.



Terrance was able to upgrade his income by 25% when he started working at Goodyear Dunlop. Michael was able to apply his skills as an electrician at Keller Technology. A part-time cashier position at Target provided the flexible schedule that Lois needed to complement her college schedule. Building up his resume with a series of entry level positions enabled Marlon to gain the experience and credibility needed to compete for a better paying position. As a result, he obtained positions with USPS and Upstate Farms Cooperative.

Many of the individuals we help have found their way to receive our employment services through family ties. Charles relocated back to the Buffalo area from Rochester after obtaining his undergraduate degree. His sisters, Michelle

and Denise directed him to the Employment Transition Services because of the success they had experienced in obtaining employment. Charles engaged in an employment venture that culminated in a position with a competitive wage at General Mills. His salary will enable him to realize his dream to someday establish a visual production company and produce his own talk show.

Working in collaboration with the Buffalo Employment and Training Center (BETC) enables Employment Transition Services to assist individuals with special identified needs. Being introduced to services offered through the One-Stop-Center (BETC) provided Joann with a subsidized employment opportunity available to individuals 55 years and over. Michael opted to work on his GED so that he could meet the requirements for the skills training necessary to get a better job.

The employment assistance provided are all customized to the individual's needs. The reason for our effectiveness is that we enable job seekers to engage in successful job searches. From the hearts of the staff of the Buffalo Urban League, we would like to say "Congratulations" to all of our clients who have achieved much through their efforts.



Coming Events *(concluded)*

Juneteenth

June 17th – 18th, 2006

Join us in celebrating the 140th Anniversary. Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. You can't beat the pure fun we'll be having at the 2006 Juneteenth Festival, held in Martin Luther King Jr. Park.



Buffalo-Niagara WiFi

*Bringing Western New York
Into The Wireless Age*



The Buffalo Urban League has joined with other area corporations and organizations in bringing you wireless access to the Internet. Beginning in February, we will be broadcasting internet signals out from our Genesee Street Main Office into Roosevelt Plaza and down Main Street. This will enable individuals with laptops in the area to log on to the BuffaloNiagara WiFi network and access the Internet.

Youth Programs

This year the Buffalo Urban League served approximately 475 Buffalo youth through its career development and educational enrichment programs. The department was able to collaborate with the NYS Department of Labor, Buffalo Public Schools, NYS Department of Education, Youth Opportunity Program of Buffalo and NYS Office of Child & Family Services. We provide a comprehensive, holistic network of youth development services designed to foster academic achievement, career exploration, and post-secondary education. Consistent with our mission, our youth programs provide a full range of education and support services to address the needs of at-risk youth from economically and educationally disadvantaged households.



Education Support Services

- **Supplemental Educational Services** – On week days, after school, we tutor students in grades 3-12 in mathematics and reading at various Buffalo Public Schools. Classroom instruction is provided using certified teachers, tutors and a state-of-the-art Internet-based educational learning system, PLATO, which is aligned with New York State standards.



- **School Engagement Services (Yes Program)** – This program teaches life skills,

computer literacy, career awareness and provides college preparation, job shadowing and community service involvement for “at-risk” 14-21 year olds.

Adolescent Vocational Exploration Program

Plus – Created for students aged 14-18, this program enables students to research their career choices and develop post-secondary education plans. Over the past 10 years, 85% of students completed the program and have graduated from high school, entered college or obtained full-time employment.



- **Computer Technology Centers Program** – The computer instruction of the PLATO Web Learning Network provides innovative, individualized instruction. Participants attending Bennett, South Park and McKinley high schools are able to prepare for regents.
- **21st Century School Grant** – The program provides career learning opportunities and post-secondary education awareness activities as well as tutoring in math and reading.
- **NULITES** – The National Urban League Initiative to Excel and Succeed is a leadership training program for high school youth. The

program teaches youth the importance of good leadership skills, fostering good school attendance, behavior and academic accomplishment.

- **Public Service & Community Collaborations** – Over the past year the Youth Department has engaged in a number of volunteer projects in Buffalo. Those community service projects included the MS Walk; Great American Clean-Up Bffalo; Sister-to Sister Leadership Conference;

Holiday Basket Give Away; Seat Belt Safety; First Night Buffalo and Thanksgiving Community Dinner. Internship opportunities were also provided through a number of community-based organizations and businesses in Buffalo. In these ventures, we were fortunate to partner with the Better Business Bureau, Children’s Hospital, Friends of the Elderly, Gloria J. Parks Community Center and Lincoln Child Care Center. This combination of structured programming, community service activities and internships provided our students engaging learning experiences.



The Journey is a publication of the Buffalo Urban League in Buffalo New York. Our Editorial Staff includes Philip Siddons, Pam Arbogast, Tishawnia Cottrell and Louise Hayes. Rodney Clyburn thought of the newsletter name and Dan MacNeal came up with the idea for the newsletter logo. If you are already a member of the Buffalo Urban League, you receive this newsletter. We are always updating our records so if you would like us to change the information we have on file, please complete the form at the right.

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