



FACT SHEET

Black Heritage Festival Fund



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ost people know the West Virginia Black Heritage Foundation because of its annual festival that attracts about 10,000 visitors to downtown Clarksburg for a celebration of African-American art, history and culture. But the focus of the organization goes beyond a yearly offering of food, fun, vendor booths and nationally-known entertainment.

“The goal of the Black Heritage Foundation is to promote the African-American experience while addressing the many milestones that our forefathers have made since the Emancipation Proclamation,” says Jim Griffin, chairman of the Board of Directors.

“Our citizens today, especially our young people, are faced with many troubling influences that can easily lead us down the wrong path. We show our youth that there are excellent opportunities available while exposing them to the positive contributions of others. Hopefully, we can help them to make the difficult decisions and stay on the right road in life.”

Each year, for example, two outstanding youths from the area are honored as the festival’s king and queen, in recognition of their contributions to the county. In addition, two scholarships are awarded each year to help worthy students attend Ohio Valley College and West Virginia University. For 2011, the scholarships are being funded through a contribution from State Farm Insurance Co.

The festival also recognizes those who have helped to build the organization over the years by selecting a senior king and queen, chosen on the basis of service to the community and serving as positive role models for both young and old.

“We have come a long way since our first organizational meeting back in 1990,” Griffin says, “but we still have a way to go to get to where we want to be. We need to open doors and we need to encourage more support from the community outside of our three-day festival.”

The Foundation has taken a major step toward its future by joining with other area non-profit groups and Bob Evans Restaurants to create a permanent endowment fund to be managed by Your Community Foundation (YCF).

The fund was started with a \$5,000 donation from West Virginia Grantmakers, made available under the “Building Donor Diversity” challenge grant program.

That initial donation has been matched with \$15,000 from Bob Evans, to be donated in installments over the next three years. YCF offers that \$20,000 as a Challenge Grant to the public, hoping to raise an additional \$60,000 that will bring the total endowment fund to \$80,000.

The endowment funds will be invested to increase their value, with net income from those investments and all future contributions used to support Black Heritage Festival programs.

Additional fund-raising activities will be announced as the Challenge Grant program moves forward. Any individual, organization or group can contribute to the West Virginia Black Heritage Festival, P.O. Box 1614, Clarksburg, WV 26301, or through YCF, P.O. Box 409, Morgantown, WV 26507.



Gerry Schmidt, YCF Board Member (left), is shown above with Black Heritage Festival officers Jim Griffin, chairman; and board members Joyce Griffin, Jo Ann James and James Harris.