

Commission expands horizons



Diane Fair/Times-News

Dick Pfefferkorn, right, executive director of the Canal Place Preservation Authority, tells members of the Maryland Commission on

African-American History and Culture about the renovations going on inside the Western Maryland Train Station.

Members seek input on area's history, culture

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CUMBERLAND — A state commission that promotes the preservation of African-American history brought its mission to the mountain side of Maryland on Monday.

The Maryland Commission on African-American History and Culture gathered for a day-long strategy meeting at the Cumberland Holiday Inn. It was the first time that the nine-member commission met in Western Maryland.

"One of the goals of the commission is to reach out to all of Maryland," said Rosalind Savage, executive director of the commission. "This is part of our attempt to do that."

The commission, which was formed in 1969, is charged with preserving and promoting African-American history and culture throughout Maryland. As part of its mandate, the commission oversees the operation of the Benjamin Banneker/Frederick Douglass Museum in Annapolis.

Cumberland resident Leontyne Peck is the first member of the commission from one of the western counties.

"I like to present the perspective that we are part of Maryland, even though the African-American population is small in Allegany and Garrett counties," she said.

Appointed to the commission in January, Peck said she felt it was important to introduce her



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Lucenia Dunn of Howard County, left, and Wayne Clark, Maryland Office of Museum Services, look inside the caboose on the Western Maryland tracks.

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Leontyne Peck,
Member of the Maryland Commission on African-American
History and Culture

fellow members to Cumberland and Allegany County. Although the bulk of Monday's meeting was a strategy session closed to the public, the commission held a luncheon with members of the community to gather input on the African-American culture in the area.

As part of that meeting, educational and religious leaders from Allegany County decided to coordinate ceremonies they are plan-

ning to conduct in January in commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

"We're bringing all of the celebrations under one umbrella," said Lucenia Dunn, a commission member from Howard County. "I think that's going to be a powerful statement for Western Maryland."

During their visit, members of

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Commission expands

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the commission toured the Western Maryland Station with Dick Pfefferkorn, executive director of the Canal Place Preservation Authority.

Commission member Stefan Goodwin said the commission needs to be aware of other areas that can be coordinated with African-American attractions as part of the state's effort to promote heritage tourism.

"Eventually, all these things will come together," Goodwin said.

An anthropology professor at Morgan State University, Goodwin encouraged area residents to preserve African-American cul-

ture and heritage by documenting the lives of older relatives through oral histories. He also said current traditions such as arts and crafts should be treasured for their cultural value.

"We need to know what the culture is out here," he said. "We need to assist the people of Western Maryland in preserving these things for all the people of Maryland."

Goodwin noted that the commission, even though it focuses on African-American heritage, serves all state residents.

"We're not simply working for African-Americans," he said. "We're working for the people of Maryland."