

Pride of a people

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Mark Harris/Times-News

Al Feldstein, left, of the Maryland Office of Planning, talks with Tonya Hardy, right, executive director of the Banneker Douglass Museum, Annapolis, Friday afternoon during the dedication of the African

American Gallery & Gift Shop on Cumberland's North Centre Street. Also engaged in conversation is Gary Horowitz, vice president of advancement at Frostburg State University.

African-American gallery opens

Dedication coincides with start of Black History Month

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CUMBERLAND

Even in rough times, blacks showed a dignity and knew they were God's children.



Deas

That's what the Rev. Alfred Deas, pastor of the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, sees when he looks at the vari-

ous photographs and biographies in the African American Gallery & Gift Shop.

Deas also is one of several who attended the gallery's dedication Friday, the first day of Black History Month. The gallery at 183 N. Centre St., Cumberland, officially opens to the

public today.

Looking at such items as the "Slave Testament" as well as other tools and toys, he saw the rich history of blacks and the impact they've had on the area.

"The rich history of Afro-



Peck

Americans in Maryland seems now to be surfacing not only in the large cities and communities, but also in the

country area where a significant amount of blacks lived," Deas said.

The gallery's first exhibit showcases local, state and national black women.

And, Deas said, it's the best place to start.

"This treats our queens as they really are — the queens of our culture," he



Mark Harris/Times-News

Doris Makang admires one of the displays at the new gallery. The first exhibit showcases local, state and national black women.

said.

Tonya Hardy, executive director of the Banneker Douglass Museum in Annapolis, cut the ribbon to open the gallery, which is

the first of its kind in the area. She said she hopes the city's exhibitions eventually are brought to the

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Eastern Shore.

"Fantastic" is what many said to describe the gallery and its contents. And many said the gallery also will help teach youth about black history and culture.

Emma Watkins of Cumberland said children need to know their heritage and the gallery is a start.

"It's wonderful. It's beautiful," she said.

Helen

Cullen of Keyser said she remembers her mother using the potato masher, meat grinder and old-fashioned iron that are placed throughout the gallery.

"I'm just so happy I was invited," she said.



Cullen

The African American Heritage Society of Western Maryland, a nonprofit membership organization, manages the gallery.

Leontyne Peck, the society's president, said the idea of such a gallery has been in the works for a decade — starting with a small group meeting at her house or local churches. And eventually evolving into a group that was ready to take on this project.

The gallery in the two-story, brick building has been in the works since August.

"We're a shining star in the state of Maryland but we don't always celebrate the contributions of African-Americans," Peck said.



J. Makang

Jean-Marie Makang of Frostburg State University said the country itself also is renewing its history.

"America is reconciling herself with her own history by recognizing and celebrating the contributions of blacks," he said.

He said the celebration, however, does not end after February's Black History Month but rather continues with communities seeking and understanding the diversity and similarities of all cultures.

The museum will be open through the beginning of April from 1 to 5 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays. The museum then will be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For more information about membership, volunteering or the gallery, call (301) 777-7758 or visit the Web site, www.aahs.net.