



Steve Bittner/Times-News

Bonita Austin, chairwoman of the Carver Community Center Board of Directors, speaks during a program to mark the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. at the center on Saturday.

MLK Day Jamboree packed with activities

All-day event set at Williams Street church

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CUMBERLAND — Honoring Martin Luther King Jr. is to teach more than a nonviolent way of life, it's about learning how to become a community.

That's the idea behind the first Martin Luther King Day Jamboree that will be held today at the Friendship Haven Church on Williams Street with activities scheduled from 9 a.m. through 5 p.m. The day is free and open

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to everyone, although those younger than 5 must be accompanied by an adult.

"The activities are tailored to the needs of the students," Erin Shank said. "A first-grader

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can enjoy it as much as someone in the 12th grade."

The day is the culmination of a project spearheaded by Shank and Lisa Snyder, two AmeriCorps Vista members who as part of their work are required to do something to honor King. She and Shank decided to combine their individual programs, Safe House and Read to Succeed.

With school off today, Shank said it will give the children a safe place to go where they'll find several activities to keep them busy.

"This will open their horizons to new activities and new ideas," she said.

"We want them to leave the day with hope," Snyder added.

Children who plan to attend all day should arrive by 9 a.m. where they'll first have the opportunity to create a cookbook. They're welcome to bring family recipes or choose one from a number of cookbooks that will be on hand. The children will shop for ingredients and then make the recipe to be served later in the day.

The recipes will be gathered and printed in a cookbook that the children will receive and will be available in a number of places including the South Cumberland Library and Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Alleghenies. The idea comes from children who said through various community groups that they were most interested in a cooking class.

The jamboree features a number of activities throughout the afternoon. Some of those events from 1 to 4 p.m. include a picture and writing contest, scrapbook table and King dream bags.

Children will have a chance to create a family tree and learn about genealogy. Different tables featuring King's "I Have a Dream," speech, videos of his life and a slide show about his life will be set up along with a table of books about different cultures and a place to read.

An oral history project where children will interview adults will be held and will continue to become part of a Listening Project, spearheaded by the Local Management Board.

Shank said the interviews will be developed into a booklet and the project will help children understand how people living in the area are one large community.

"There are so many activities, they won't be bored," Shank said.

Snyder said several organizations, including the Neighborhood Advisory Commission, Allegheny Conflict Resolution Center and C3I, will be on hand.

Mayor Lee Fiedler is to read "Dream" at 4 p.m., followed by Julianna Albowicz, a representative for U.S. Sen. Barbara Mikulski, who will bring a letter from the senator.

Tobacco restitution grant funding through the Allegheny County Health Department provided necessary monies for the day.

"This could become an annual event," Shank said. "We may not be the ones spearheading it in the future, but we're planning for it to be a long-standing event."

For more information, call Snyder at (240) 580-4575 or Shank at (301) 491-5609.

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