



Tuesday, January 21, 2003

## MLK Day events keep the dream alive

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Various cultural, social and community service events were held at Oakland University Monday, Jan. 20, to honor the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and to kick off **African-American Celebration Month**. Hundreds of students, faculty and staff participated throughout the day to promote racial harmony and civil rights.

"I think commemorating Dr. King's birthday each year keeps his dream alive and helps us pass his vision from one generation to the next," said Associate Professor of Anthropology Richard Stamps, who participated in the day's events. "Most of the students were born long after Dr. King made his march. But these events give young people the encouragement they need to help fulfill their dreams. It's also important to encourage diversity to help our young people prepare for the future."

MLK Day events began with the Association of Black Students campus march and birthday celebration. More than 100 students, faculty and staff participated in the march, which began at Vandenberg Hall at 11:30 a.m. Marchers sang "We Shall Overcome" while proceeding past Graham Health Center, Meadow Brook Theatre, Wilson Hall and North Foundation Hall.

"I've participated in the march in each of the four years I've been at OU," said senior psychology major Dawn Dillard. "With Martin Luther King Jr., a lot of the freedoms we take for granted today would not have been possible. I can make this one small sacrifice by marching in the cold weather for all the sacrifices Dr. King made."

The march concluded in the Oakland Center, where birthday celebrations continued at the Pioneer Food Court. Robert Thornton (CAS '77), program officer for the Skillman Foundation in Detroit, delivered the keynote address, which centered around the theme "Staying the Course."

"Dr. King created a value system to guide him through his entire life," Thornton said in his address. "He didn't waver in the face of injustice. He used his stature to elevate the lives of others. He never wavered from the civil rights movement – he stayed the course."

Thornton also encouraged OU students to follow King's example and make contributions to their communities.

"Each of you has the capacity to serve," he said. "There are some people less fortunate than you who can benefit from your academic skills. Use those skills to help others. Every time you make an investment in someone else you make an investment in yourself. Each of you has the ability to help shape policy on your campus. You have an obligation to become an active participant in your community.

"This philosophy can be summed up in one word: can. Do what you can for whom you can. If you do this, you will transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows."

Thornton's message coincided with a community service project that began in the Oakland Center's Gold Rooms following the birthday celebrations and keynote address. The **Oakland University Golden Key International Honour Society** teamed with the Association of Black Students, Alpha Delta Pi Sorority and students from many other organizations to make about 1,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to distribute to nine local homeless shelters.

The sandwich making was more successful than anticipated. The event concluded within a half hour when the 63 sandwich makers used all the bread.

"The theme for our initiative this year is "Help the Homeless," said senior finance major and Golden Key President Emily Fulton. "In a sense, it blows my mind to see so many people representing other student organizations wanted to come out here today and help make a difference. People don't realize that the face of the homeless is changing. The vast majority that we see at the shelters are people who lost jobs and are there with their entire families. We also see a lot of single mothers. There are over 180 children at the nine locations we're visiting, and we also collected toys to distribute."

Students packed the sandwiches and toys along with bags of chips and pop containers to deliver to the shelters before the dinner hour.

The day's events ended with "Personal Reflections." Students, faculty and staff gathered in the Oakland Center's Fireside Lounge to read and reflect on favorite quotes or passages from King's speeches and writings. Attendees also listened to a recording of a portion of King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

"Many of the students spoke of sharing King's dream and of pursuing their own dreams," said Jean Ann Miller, director of the Center for Student Activities. "They talked about their goals and maintaining focus. Others also spoke of giving back to people and contributing to their communities without expecting anything in return. And others advocated non-violence with regard to the recent possibilities of war. It was a very nice, community-oriented event."

OU students are encouraged to participate in the sixth annual All Campus Contest in Commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr. Students are asked to submit an original essay or poem, not to exceed 1,000 words, that addresses the question: "As a student at Oakland University, how can you make an impact to resolve the problem of the color-line in the 21st Century?"

The cash prizes are \$300 for first place and \$100 each for second and third place. Entry forms can be picked up at the **Center for Student Activities**, 49 Oakland Center, and must be returned by 5 p.m. Friday, Feb. 14. Winners will be announced at the African-American Celebration Month closing ceremonies, "The Souls of Black Folk ... The Celebration Continues," on Wednesday, Feb. 19, at noon in the Fireside Lounge.

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