

Eugene to begin King celebration

By Carolyn Lamberson
Of the Emerald

Eugene begins its first, major, communitywide celebration of the birthday of slain civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. today at 4:00 p.m. with the rededication of the city's Martin Luther King Park located at the corner of 10th Avenue and Grant Street.

The weeklong celebration will also feature two speeches by the Rev. C.T. Vivian of Atlanta. Vivian currently is the board chairman of the Center for Democratic Renewal, an organization devoted to ending racist violence, and he is the author of "Black Power and the American Myth." He is also a former associate of King's.

King was born Jan 15, 1929. As a Baptist minister and civil rights leader, he won the Noble Peace Prize in 1964 for his efforts to bring about equality for blacks through peaceful methods. King's policy of non-violent, direct action led to many important civil rights laws being passed during the '60s. He was assassinated April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tenn. at the age of 39.

The celebration is being coordinated by the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Task Force. Nancy Waggoner, a task force staff member, said the idea for a community celebration for the civil rights leader stemmed from the Eugene Minority Commission's desire to keep King's dream alive. The task force was formed as a way for other Eugene organizations to meet and work together on the celebration.

Debra Cook, a leader of the task force, believes that a lot of good came out of the cooperation between organizations.

"A lot of us hadn't worked together before and in the beginning things were a little difficult," she said. "We knew what our goal was, and when we settled down and learned each others' working styles, things went well."

The Black Student Union hosted films on Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and the Civil Rights Movement in the North and South on Wednesday night. The BSU is sponsoring a program featuring a dance performance and a dramatic reading by University students, the Inspirational Sounds Gospel Choir, and University of Michigan Sociology Professor Aldon Morris on Sunday in the

EMU Ballroom at 7 p.m. Morris is the author of "The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement."

"This is not just a minority event," said BSU member David Butler. "It's free and open to everyone. There's a reception afterwards and we want to pack the ballroom."

The events begin with the park rededication and there will be a major event every day through Monday, Cook said.

A peace march from South Eugene High School to the Hult Center will take place Friday at noon. The Rev. Vivian will speak at the conclusion of the march, and then at 7:30 p.m., he will give a keynote address at the Hult Center.

The BSU will also sponsor a multicultural fair at South Eugene High School on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.,

and Sunday from 4 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The celebration will conclude Monday with the theme "Living the Dream in Eugene" at South Eugene High School at 7:30 p.m. The guest speaker will be Superintendent of Eugene Public Schools Margaret Nichols. Also featured will be the Rev. Perry Parker, giving his rendition of King's Lincoln Memorial address, and the Inspirational Sounds Gospel Choir.

Waggoner hopes the communitywide celebration will become an annual event.

"There are areas this year that we didn't do too well on," she said. "Hopefully next year, we'll have those problems worked out."

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