

Competition targets skills of high school students

Leaders examine student projects for placement in a national ACT-SO contest, to be held during the NAACP annual convention in Baltimore

By Lorraine-Michelle Faust
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African-American students from around Lane County competed Saturday in the Afro-Academic Cultural Technological Scientific Olympics (ACT-SO) at Sheldon High School.

At the local ACT-SO competition student projects are judged by teachers and professionals from the community. Categories encompass a wide array of fields including, but not limited to, science and mathematics (biology, chemistry, physics, algebra, calculus), visual/performing arts (photography, dance, theater) as well as speech, poetry and essay writing. Students who receive 92 points or more are given a gold medal and go on to compete at the national ACT-SO competi-

tion, which is held during the annual convention for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). This year it will be in Baltimore, home of the NAACP's national headquarters.

Kawezya Hutchinson, an 18-year-old senior at South Eugene High School, competed in the ACT-SO drawing competition.

"Usually, you see Grace Kelly and Katherine Hepburn in American visions of elegance and grace, but this is different because even though it's a village they have pride about themselves, they carry themselves in a manner that is really powerful and it speaks to you," she said explaining an African scene she had drawn that used fluid colors to display thin, African women

carrying pots on their heads. Arbrella Luvert, the ACT-SO chairwoman, said she believes the community needs to begin to discover the elegance and grace in those who are usually overlooked.

"We need everybody to recognize the various gifts that kids have," she said.

The ACT-SO coordinator, Dr. Snell Fontus, is still looking to improve the program, but says it needs more community and University involvement. Many of the program's mentors are University professors, but Fontus said he would like to see more student volunteers in the program.

"I would love to tap into the University because [it has] a whole bunch of equipment that we don't have access to," he said.

Luvert said Vernon Jarrett, ACT-SO's founder, started the program "to counteract some of the negative press that was given to African-American students. So

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Snell Fontus
ACT-SO coordinator

that every time that you look up, it's not just a negative thing."

Fontus said that recognition of students' talents works to create leaders in the community. Previous ACT-SO participants have come back from national competitions to begin multicultural clubs in their high schools and many of them lead the NAACP Youth Council.

"For a kid from Eugene, it's the first time that they're in a convention center with 5,000 other black people, and we're talking 5,000 talented black people — people who are professionals, movies stars go there, the heads of civil rights organizations go there," Fontus said. "It's a great experience."

Luvert emphasized that she thinks kids will achieve if leaders cultivate their self esteem.

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The ACT-SO meetings are held in conjunction with the NAACP Youth Council meetings at noon on every third Saturday of the month at the NAACP office at 44 W. Broadway. Those interested in donating time or money to ACT-SO can also call Fontus at 684-4716.

Multicultural

continued from page 1

style foods will be served as part of a buffet. The proceeds will be donated to PCUN, the Spanish acronym for the Northwest Farmworker Union.

There will be keynote addresses by Seale and Olmos following the dinner. Hernandez said MCC members are excited to hear Seale speak about founding the Black Panther Party in the 1960s.

"One of the reasons why we chose for him to come here is because we want to know more about the climate during that time," he said.

Olmos will also deliver a keynote address relating to activism and his personal experiences as an activist.

MCC program organizer Darlene Dadrás said Olmos usually speaks to under repre-

sented audiences who have no voice in their communities. Dadrás said college students are not among Olmos' typical listeners, but they also need to hear his message.

Hernandez said the MCC invited Olmos because it will be showing his film "Americanos: Latino Life in the United States" as part of the celebration. The film, which has not received widespread release yet, will be shown Thursday evening. Hernandez said the film portrays the roles Latinos living in the United States play in their communities.

"We're honored to have this film," Hernandez said.

Seale will also speak Friday at noon at the MCC and engage in an open forum with students.

In an effort to encourage diversity among faculty and University depart-

ments, MCC members will give out the "zero awards" on Thursday at noon in the EMU Amphitheater to departments that currently lack tenured faculty of color.

Hernandez and Dadrás said they hope the awards, given to both first-time and past recipients, will provide an incentive for more diversity in the more than 10 departments that currently do not have tenured faculty members of color.

"It's important because right now there are several search committees in place because this is the hiring season for several departments," Hernandez said.

Another event promoting diversity will be held Saturday in the EMU Ballroom. The Black Student Union is hosting a Black Arts Festival, which will include a variety of musical performances and a step show.

Hernandez and Dadrás said MCC mem-

bers have been working to organize the speaker series since October and are now looking forward to seeing their efforts come together this week.

MCC program advocate Jamila Singleton said she hopes the events will educate the campus community as well as the community at large about labor and diversity issues.

"I'm looking forward to all of them," Singleton said. "I'm hoping to see students from all over the campus gather together and hear the speakers."

Dadrás said although the events are combined for the purposes of the celebration, every event is a highlight in its own right. She also said all events are important in reinforcing the messages the MCC tries to convey.

"I feel like the celebration of activism is a great line for what the MCC is hoping to bring to this campus," she said.

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