

Drug Card Scams Reported

Area residents should be skeptical of anyone trying to sell them so-called drug discount health cards, warns Jerry Cohen, the Oregon director of AARP.

The recently enacted Medicare legislation authorizes the use of drug discount cards from June 2004 through 2005 to provide older adults with some transitional help until the full drug benefit begins in 2006.

"The real Medicare drug cards can't be marketed until May, but it seems that scam artists are busy exploiting the new Medicare law by pushing phony discount cards now," said Cohen. "There are currently no approved Medicare discount card sponsors. When Medicare does approve a card, the sponsor will be using an approved Medicare seal."

Oregon consumers who are approached with offers to buy Medicare drug cards now should report the activity to the Oregon Attorney General's Consumer Hotline at 1-877-8779 (toll free) from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Farrakhan Advances Reparations

Islam leader speaks in worldwide broadcast

(AP) — In a speech peppered with criticisms of President Bush, Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan on Sunday pressed for America and England to grant slave reparations.

Farrakhan, speaking during a worldwide satellite broadcast at the final session of the Nation of Islam's annual meeting, also voiced support for Michael Jackson and warned blacks against supporting the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination, Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass.

"Black people are so angry with President Bush that they're willing to give Sen. Kerry a free ride," he said. "Getting rid of Bush and getting John Kerry ... will mean you'll get more of the same."

Farrakhan said blacks should consider supporting candidate Al Sharpton to give that candidate more power to promote black issues.

While calling Sharpton "brilliant," Farrakhan told the crowd: "You know, I know and he knows that he ain't going to be no president."

Farrakhan accused Bush of wanting to go to war with Iraq from his first day in office, and of knowing Saddam Hussein didn't have weapons of mass destruction.

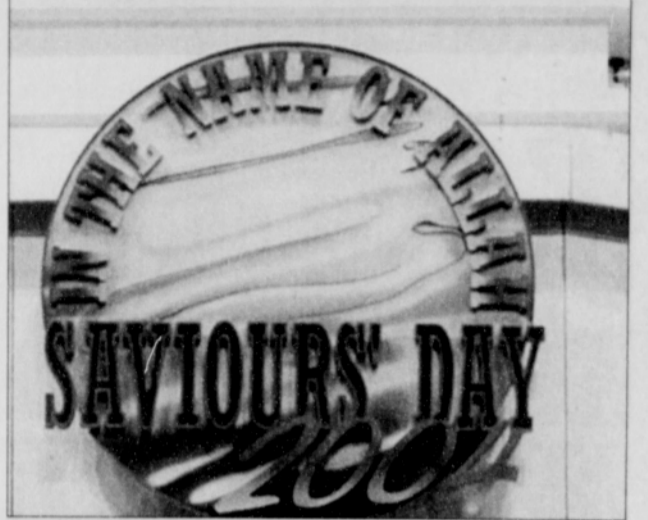
Former chief weapons inspector David Kay has concluded Iraq didn't have weapons of mass destruction. Bush has defended his decision to go to war, saying Saddam was a threat.

Speaking for about three hours, Farrakhan, 70, said America and Great Britain need to recognize their roles in the slave trade. He urged Congress to consider a bill sponsored by Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich. that would establish a commission to study slavery.

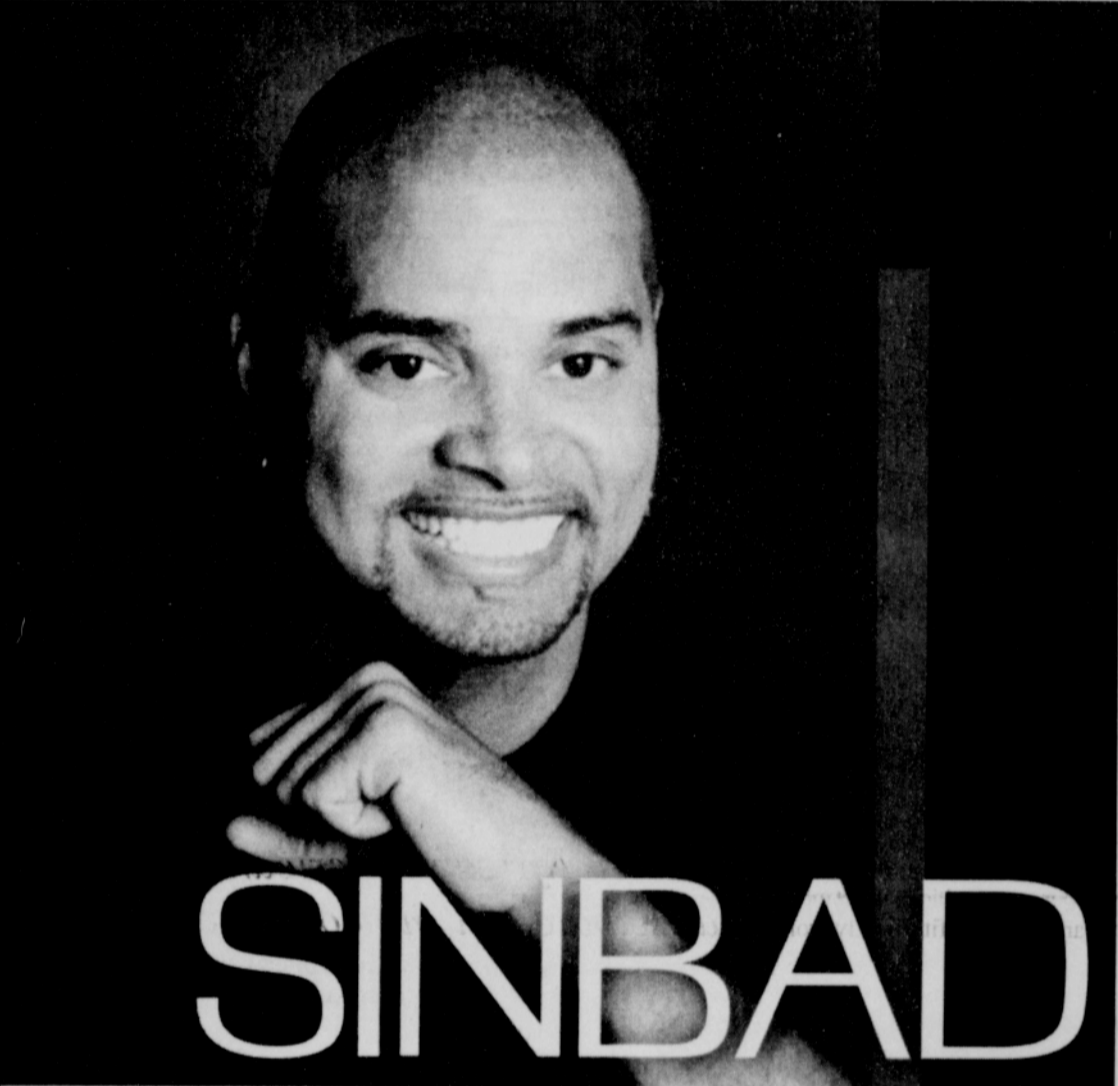
Farrakhan said whites fail to realize they hold privileged positions in America because of slavery.

"If America is not willing to look at ... what happened to us as a people, there will never be a chance for good relations between blacks and whites," he said.

Farrakhan said he believes Michael Jackson is innocent of charges he committed lewd acts on a child. Nation of Islam chief of staff Leonard F. Muhammad has been working with Jackson, and other members of the group are providing security for the pop star.



Nation of Islam leader Minister Louis Farrakhan addresses those gathered at the annual Saviours' Day on Sunday in Chicago. (AP photo)



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Nike Honors Minority Contributions

Willie Gregory, Nike's director of community and business relations in Memphis, Tenn., was named African-American Person of the Year at a Black History Month ceremony in Nike's world headquarters in Beaverton. Gregory (center) with his sons, Willie Jr. (left) and Ben, and wife, Addielene attend the celebration.

Filing Taxes Gets EZer with Technology

The Internal Revenue Service is kicking off tax season with 1040 Central and other enhanced electronic services making the agency's Web site easier to use.

The IRS is also encouraging taxpayers to avoid headaches by filing and preparing tax returns early.

At irs.gov, taxpayers will find

information about lower tax rates, larger child tax credits, elimination of the "marriage penalty," new income limits for earned income tax credit recipients and more.

To get a jumpstart on filing long before the April 15 deadline, gather all forms, including W-2s and 1099s, save a copy for your

files, and download the right forms at www.irs.gov under "forms and publications."

To get the fastest refund, e-file using direct deposit. Electric filing also catches math problems.

For problems or questions with filing, call the IRS customer service helpline at 800-829-1040.

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