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## ***Special Events kick-off MLK-50, African American History Month***

**MLK-50**, a year-long commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who was assassinated fifty years ago, was ushered-in on the evening of January 4 with a new exhibit at the AAHM. The **African American History Museum Heralds the King** depicts the life and accomplishments of Dr. King. Famous speeches and lyrical quotations are highlighted, and artifacts are displayed. The exhibit was researched and compiled by AAHM volunteers and the Illinois State Museum generously prepared the exhibits.

The MLK-50 commemoration continues through 2018 with activities and programs at the Museum as well as other locations throughout the city. **See page 7 for the year-long schedule of events.**

**African American History Month** was kicked-off on February 1 at the Illinois State Library. The African American History Museum, with its president Nell Clay serving as emcee, and the IL Department of Human Rights (IDHR) provided a program resounding with messages about the past, present and future of civil rights in this country.

Springfield Mayor Jim Langfelder opened the ceremony and presented a proclamation to the IDHR. Ngozi Okorator from the Governor's office also offered a declaration. Accepting these proclamations was Acting Department Director Janice Glenn. Glenn encouraged all units of state government to join the "Commitment to Fairness and Equity Campaign," that proclaims fairness and equality for all people who live, work, study, play or worship in their community. Clay discussed exhibits and programs at the museum, plans for a year-long recognition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other projects in the works.

Teresa Haley, president of both the Springfield and Illinois State NAACP chapters, presented the rousing key-note address. Haley spoke of the leadership provided by the NAACP since its inception in 1909, and of the diligent efforts still underway to achieve equality for all people, African Americans and others as well.

Capping the occasion was a poignant performance by Kathryn Harris portraying Harriet Tubman, conductor in the Underground Railroad. Harris, retired from the position of Library Services Director at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, is a board member of the African American History Museum.



**Springfield and Central Illinois  
African American History Museum**

### **OUR MISSION**

- \* We tell authentic stories about African-American life in Central Illinois, past and present, celebrating and sharing our history and culture and planning for the future.
- \* We will do this through scholarship, oral histories, exhibits, partnerships, our board, our supporters and our friends.
- \* We are and will be community builders.
- \* We recognize that our stories are at once unique but connected to those of other communities and we will support those interconnections.
- \* We will be integral to the cultural life of our area. We will partner with like-minded organizations.
- \* We will be proactive in our community.
- \* We will study and apply best-practices in business, scholarship and communication.

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- Nell Clay**, *President*  
**Sue Massie**, *First Vice President*  
**Archie Lawrence**,  
*Second Vice President*  
**Douglas King**, *Third Vice President*  
**Elizabeth Alexander**,  
*Recording Secretary*  
**Minnie Gillespie**, *Treasurer*
- Elizabeth Buchta**  
**Kathryn Harris**  
**Douglas Holt**  
**Ocheng Jany**  
**Ernestine Lawrence**  
**James Lewis**  
**Aaron Pearl-Cropp**  
**Gail Simpson**
- Doris Bailey**, *Museum Coordinator*

**AAHM website:** [spiaahm.org](http://spiaahm.org)  
**Address:** 1440 Monument Ave., Springfield, IL 62702  
**Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 301, Springfield, IL 62705  
**Telephone:** 217-391-6323  
**Follow us on Facebook**

# ***Letters from the Presidents***

Hello Everyone:

It is with pride and pleasure that my husband and I have been involved with the African American History Museum of Springfield and Central Illinois for the past four years. For the first two years I was a volunteer and for the second two years I was a board member and chairman of the Program Committee.

It is with apprehension and prayer that I accept the position of President of the AAHM Board of Directors. To fill the shoes of those who came before me – Doug King, Jerrie Blakely, Rudy Davenport - is an enormous challenge. I am confident, however, that with our dedicated Board of Directors we can take our Museum to the next level.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a speech entitled “What Is Your Life’s Blueprint?” In that speech he tells students that once they decide what they will be in life to “set out to do it as if God Almighty called you at this particular moment in history to do it.” Don’t just do a good job, do it like no one could do it better. He goes on to say that if you are called to be a “Street Sweeper,” then be the very best Street Sweeper there is. But whatever you do, do it the very best that you can.

I am dedicating myself, as museum presidents have done before, to work along with the fantastic board members and awesome volunteers to have the best possible museum in Springfield and Central Illinois. We will dig deep to research and prepare the best exhibits possible. We will diligently develop and present the best programs to our community. We vow to be the best community partners possible to bring harmony, respect and understanding within our community. I invite you to come join us.

Sincerely,  
*Nell R. Clay*

My Dear Friends,

I am honored to recognize this year’s officers and board members of the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum. These individuals have demonstrated their commitment to advancing the mission and potential of our Museum. With their leadership, together with our excellent museum coordinator and cadre of excellent volunteers, the Museum will be able to serve the community in even stronger and more meaningful ways as time goes on.

I am especially pleased that Nell Clay has accepted the position of Board President. Nell has been very active on the Museum Board. Her interests and abilities span the breadth of our museum operations. I appreciate her outgoing personality and great enthusiasm. Nell will be an excellent president of the organization.

As the outgoing president I will say that these three years have been exciting and extremely satisfying as goals are set and achieved, visitors become friends and supporters, and the community absorbs and learns from the information we present. At times, being President can also be overwhelming and exhausting. Now is the right time for me to take a step back and let others come forward. I look forward to continuing on the Museum Board and doing all I can to contribute.

I urge all of you to continue supporting the Museum in ways that suit your interests and abilities. Thank you.

My Best to All of You,  
**Douglas King**



is the quarterly newsletter of the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, 1440 Monument Avenue, Springfield, Illinois.

# Meet Doris Bailey, Museum Coordinator



Doris J. Bailey was recently tapped as Museum Coordinator of the African American History Museum. She has served on the Museum Board and as a volunteer. She was also an intern at the Museum, working to log museum collections and organize records. Bailey has a bachelor's degree in sociology/anthropology from the University of Illinois at Springfield, with a minor in African American Studies. Bailey and her husband Cleo have five children who are grown and live in the Springfield area. Bailey's exceptional qualifications allowed her to step-right-into the coordinator position and become indispensable. Anyone calling for information, stopping for a visit, or applying to become a member or volunteer will soon come to know Doris Bailey, a true gem of our Museum.

## Standing Committees Key to the Museum's Success

Committees are the working mechanisms of the Museum. Committees typically meet once a month to plan and prepare for the tasks ahead. Anyone interested in serving on a committee should contact the committee chair. Committee participation is a great way to learn more about the Museum and get to know other dedicated volunteers.

The **Education and Exhibits Committee** (Kathryn Harris, chair) identifies subjects of interest and arranges for development of exhibits and associated programs.

The **Programs and Projects Committee** identifies and develops special events held both in-house and at remote locations. Gail Simpson and Minnie Gillespie lead this effort.

The **Finance Committee** (Minnie Gillespie, chair) develops and monitors budgets and considers financial strategies. Gillespie leads the capital campaign; Doug King leads fundraising; and Pat Davis focuses on grants.

The **Communications Committee** involves marketing and public relations/marketing by Doug King, Jim Lewis and Douglas Holt; the *Sojourner* newsletter by Sue Massie; website maintenance by Jenni Dahl and Roger Powers; and Facebook by Elizabeth Alexander.

The **Membership Committee** (Sue Massie, chair) provides membership services and special membership events but also maintains the electronic database and communications which is managed by Jenni Dahl.

The **Facility Administration Committee** (Elizabeth Alexander, chair) covers physical and infrastructure needs of the building from grounds care, to utility needs and supply purchases.

The **Gala Committee** (Ocheng Jany and Ernestine and Archie Lawrence, co-chairs) plans and executes this annual fund raising event that includes a banquet, entertainment, a silent auction and recognition of honorees.

The **Summer Day Camp** (Pam King, chair) provides children with educational and fun-filled activities. The program combines African-American history and the arts, and includes special activities provided by partners from around the city.

## Behind the Scenes with Museum Volunteer *Judy Betts Davis*

Hi! I'm Judy Betts Davis, a volunteer at the AAHM. Many of you know me as a musician who plays at events around the community. I have been a museum volunteer for about two years and enjoy it a lot. You never know who will walk in the door. It could be someone well versed in history or it could be someone who has never stepped foot in a museum before! It could be a familiar face or a visitor from another state, county or continent. Interaction with our visitors, as well as exposure to our exhibits, programs and other volunteers at the Museum, has broadened my knowledge and underscored the importance of this Museum. With a recent African-American President and a current black Super-Hero making history, there is sure to be much more African American history to be told in this museum as time goes on.



### WE NEED YOU TOO !

You are welcome and needed at the Museum. Consider helping one of the committees where there are opportunities to apply skills that you already have, or to learn new skills, while working side-by-side with some of the most knowledgeable and dedicated people you'll find anywhere. Or you can greet visitors, give Museum tours or host social events. For those who love children, volunteers are needed to assist with visits by school groups and to help with the Summer Day Camp. Whatever your interests, there is sure to be a place for you at the Museum.

# Winter Highlights

## NOVEMBER

The Museum hosted a reception for **Mr. Hershel “Woodie” Williams**, the last surviving WWII Marine wearing the Medal of Honor, awarded to him for extraordinary bravery during the infamous Battle of Iwo Jima. “Woodie” was in Springfield to break ground for a Gold Star Family monument in Oak Ridge Cemetery. Although the day was cold and blustery, veterans’ organizations, families and friends attended the ceremony and afterward, they greatly appreciated the warmth and hospitality provided at the Museum.



**The Greater Springfield Interfaith Association** gathered at the Museum in November for the annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service. Members of faith groups throughout the city gathered to share messages in the form of reflections, readings, poetry and music. The Museum is honored to have been selected as the venue for this inclusive and humanitarian association.

Following a local Motown performance, a fundraiser for AAHM was hosted by the Springfield Art Association entitled **Motown Canvas and Cocktails**. A lively group of painters enjoyed the evening and returned home with their original works of art.



In November, the Museum joined with many other organizations at **Memorial’s Festival of Trees**, to decorate a tree for hospital’s annual charity event. Christmas trees and wreaths, music performers, and other attractions created the holiday spectacle visited by thousands during its nine-day run. The AAHM tree was purchased for Springfield’s DuBois School.

## DECEMBER

**The Young Philanthropists** of the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln held their annual grant awards program at the Museum. Young Philanthropists provides grants to organizations that aim to improve childhood development and education. That evening a \$10,000 grant was awarded to **The Outlet** whose mission is to help fatherless male youths develop the ability to make responsible life decisions, hold real meaningful spiritual values, explore their gifts and realize their dreams.

## JANUARY

The “MLK50” year-long commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. commenced at the Museum with an opening of the new exhibit, **The African American History Museum Heralds the King**. See page 1 for more.

**African American History Month** kicked-off February 1 at the **Illinois State Library**. See page 1 for more.

A panel from the AAHM, Springfield Bicentennial Committee and Dominican Sister Mary Jean Traeger presented **Race and Reconciliation**, a discussion of how progress can be made in race and ethnic relations. Sr. Mary Jean, a consultant with Crossroads Anti-Racism training and founding member of the Faith Coalition, offered insights from her experience and fielded many thoughts generated by those attending.

Museum Coordinator Bailey and volunteer Roger Powers visited the **Taylorville Correctional Center and the Jacksonville Correctional Center**, both state minimum security prisons for men. Bailey and Powers displayed some of the museum's traveling exhibits, discussed African American history and answered questions. Nearly 100 inmates participated in these opportunities to learn more about black heritage.

AAHM President Nell Clay and Coordinator Doris Bailey spoke at the **Illinois State Museum Brown Bag**, a monthly speaker series held at the Museum's Collection Center. Bailey provided a thoughtful presentation about the African American experience in Central Illinois. Clay reviewed a few past events of the Museum, including the celebrated Tuskegee Airmen program, and spoke about the events planned for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. King's assassination and many other exhibits and programs scheduled at the Museum.

Each year the Illinois State Historical Society in partnership with UIS hosts a series of **SAGE Society** luncheon speakers. AAHM President Nell Clay and Recording Secretary Elizabeth Alexander spoke at February's luncheon. Alexander provided an overview of the Museum and discussed ways in which the Museum provides information and connects with the community. Clay then talked about programs, past and future, and invited the audience to visit, to volunteer and to become members.

The AAHM is proud to have received a **National Park Service Award for the AAHM Summer Day Camp** first held in 2016. One of only six awards given by the National Park Service for collaborative programming, the partners—Lincoln Home National Park, Springfield State Historic Sites, New Salem Historic Site, Elijah Iles House Foundation, Lincoln Tomb Association, Oak Ridge Cemetery Foundation and the Calvary Missionary Baptist Church —provided programs and activities for campers. The camp will be offered again this year from June 4 through 8 under the directorship of volunteer Pam King.



*Camp Director Pam King accepts National Park Service Award for AAHM Summer Day Camp.*

## **PIONEERS from page 7**

**By Elizabeth Alexander**

In Springfield, IL in 1893 and later, a black Civil War Veteran petitioned the government for several years to receive a \$6 increase in his military pension. One man was the first black baker at a bakery in Springfield. Another two brothers arrived via the Underground Railroad. Another became superintendent of Camp Butler National Cemetery. These families came to Springfield from Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Missouri seeking to be recognized for their humanity and for freedom. The families lived in Rochester, Chatham, Buffalo, Mechanicsburg, and Springfield.

Unfortunately, one family member became a victim of the 1908 Race Riot, experiencing some of the violence they thought they had left behind. Others found opportunities to earn a living and establish businesses, buy their own homes and raise their families in peaceful circumstances. Two of these pioneers helped establish Zion Missionary Baptist Church in 1838. In the 1950s a descendant father finally enjoyed the luxury of taking his children on special trips around the country; something unheard of when the pioneers first arrived in Central Illinois.

Their descendants became lawyers, businessmen, farmers, beauticians, preachers, landowners, teachers, secretaries, managers, soldiers, and so much more. In this exhibit, along with historic documents and pictures, we show several family reunions celebrating the steadfastness, resilience, and faith of the descendants of these pioneer families.

# Coming Attractions

**MUSEUM HOURS: TUESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, NOON TO 4 P.M.; SATURDAYS 10A.M. TO 5 P.M.**

March 10 (Saturday), beginning at 2:30

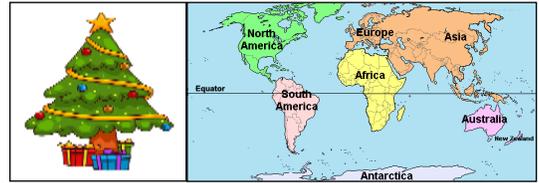
## **The Legends Luncheon**

To recognize National Women's Month and Dr. King's legacy, the AAHM honors local women who were active in the civil rights movement. Program and luncheon provided. Tickets \$25.

April 14 (Saturday), 3 to 6 p.m.

## **Second Chance Christmas**

Come join the African American History Museum on an exciting world journey through food. On this journey you will sample the world's cuisines from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and the Americas. After tasting these wonderful and pleasing dishes you will have a chance to vote for your favorite dishes, table decorations and costumes worn by the chefs. This event is for all ages, family and friends. No charge but donations are suggested)



May 6 (Sunday), 4 to 6 p.m.

## **Grand Opening: Early African American Pioneers of Central Illinois**

This new exhibit explores and illuminates African American families who moved to Central Illinois in the 1800's and who still have descendants in Springfield. The exhibit is the result of research and interviews done by board member Elizabeth Alexander and volunteer Patricia Davis. It was sponsored and funded by a grant from the Sangamon County Historical Society. No charge but donations are welcome. **See PIONEERS, page 5.**

May 31 (Thursday), 5 to 8 p.m.

## **Annual Membership Meeting**

A membership meeting for all museum members, their family and friends, as well as museum partners and sponsors will include a short business meeting to report on the status of the museum. This event will feature live music by Steve Alexander and Judy and Allen Davis, some of the Museum's talented volunteers, dancing and refreshments. There is no admission fee, although donations to the Museum will be gratefully accepted.

June 4 through 8, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## **Summer Day Camp: *Learn from the Past . . . Create your own Future***

For the third year in a row, AAHM is hosting Summer Day Camp for children going into grades three through five. This camp is filled with exciting activities that both entertain and educate children. Although the camp is held at the Museum and managed by museum volunteer Pam King, numerous other historic agencies and organizations also contribute unique high-quality programs during the camp hours. Hot lunches are furnished as well as snacks. Cost is \$100 per camper for the week.



October 25 (Thursday), save this date

## **Gala 2018: 200 Years of African American Achievements**

Recognizing this year's Bicentennial of the State, the AAHM will be shining a light on some of the Illinois African Americans who made significant contributions to the development of the state, many who also shaped the course of American history. This year's Gala will be held at the Crowne Plaza.

# 2018 Calendar of Events

## A FULL YEAR OF MLK-50 EVENTS

April 4, 2018 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The AAHM and other local organizations are working together to plan commemorative events. AAHM program coordinator Nell Clay explained, "We want to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. King's assassination by celebrating his life."

Meetings are being held regularly to discuss programs and set schedules. Organizations can sponsor their own events or join with others in hosting programs, events, and activities. Individuals can help with particular programs or assist with organizing. For information check the AAHM website at [www.spiaahm.org](http://www.spiaahm.org) and Facebook page, or call Nell Clay at 217.638.5755.

Activities are in various phases of development and others are still being added. Unless noted otherwise, programs will be held at the Museum.

### JANUARY 2018

- **African American History Museum** Grand Opening of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. exhibit. Opening and Reception January 4. Viewing begins at 5:30 p.m. and program begins at 6 p.m.
- **Frontiers International** hosts the Dr. Martin Luther King Breakfast on January 15 at the Wyndham Springfield City Centre, 700 E. Adams, Springfield, IL. Tickets are \$25 from any member or by calling Richard Bowen at 217.725.2626 (cell) or 217.529.0767 (hm.)
- The **Ministerial Alliance** sponsors the MLK Writing Competition January 14.
- The **NAACP** leads its annual Unity March on January 15 beginning at noon from Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church to Pleasant Grove Baptist Church.

### FEBRUARY 2018

- February 17, 4 p.m. at the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, a Coalition of **AAHM, UIS, the Bicentennial Commission** and others lead Race & Reconciliation program.

### MARCH 2018

- **Hoogland Center of Springfield** presents "All the Way," a play that begins as LBJ becomes President and deals with pressure from Dr. King and other activists to pass the Civil Rights Act. Performances on March 2, 3, 4 and 9, 10, 11.
- **AAHM Legacy Luncheon** celebrates women who participated in the civil rights movement. 12:30 p.m. Saturday, March 10, includes luncheon and program. For tickets call 217/391-6323.
- The **4-H Youth** development group reenacts the Selma, Alabama, March on Sunday, March 25 beginning at 4 p.m. The march will begin at the bridge over Clear Lake Avenue and continue to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. At the Museum, there will be a panel discussion.

### APRIL 2018

- **I-Magic Nation** leads a Reading and Discussion of Dr. King's speeches. April 7 at 1 p.m., April 10 at 10 a.m. at the Union Baptist Church.
- **Robert Moore**, retired US Marshal, leads a workshop/discussion on Non-violence and Activism. Tentative date set for April 19 from 6 to 8 p.m. Local youth groups, Boys and Girls Club, the Outlet and others will be involved.
- **Second Chance Christmas at AAHM**, celebrating diversity around the world with ethnic clothing, foods, and activities. April 14 from 3 to 6 o'clock.

### OCTOBER 2018

- The **Springfield Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity** hosts a reading and program which will focus on the speech Dr. King made in Springfield on October 7, 1965.
- The **AAHM** holds its 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala, October 25, 2018 at the Crowne Plaza.

African American History Museum  
Springfield and Central Illinois  
P.O. Box 301  
Springfield, IL 62705-0301



## MEMBERSHIP

Members receive membership cards, the *Sojourner* newsletter and museum communications. Members at the Sustaining level and above also receive invitations to previews, grand openings and special VIP events.

### Membership Categories

- |  |       |                                      |  |
|--|-------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual    | \$ 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting  | \$ 100-\$ 199                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family        | \$ 50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining  | \$ 200-\$ 499                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth/student | \$15  | <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing   | \$ 500-\$ 999                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior        | \$20  | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member | \$1,000 <i>includes free lifetime admission.</i> |

Business Member \$500-\$999 (includes business listing at museum events)

I would like to pay now for three years of membership . AMOUNT enclosed )\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

City, state, zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Your check should be made payable to the African American History Museum of Springfield and Central Illinois (AAHM) , P.O. Box 301, Springfield, IL 62705-0301