

African-American Read-In focuses on literacy, culture

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STAFF REPORT

Residents of Carrollton are invited to enjoy an educational and celebratory event Saturday, Feb. 4, that for the last seven years has celebrated literacy and African-American writers.

Last year, participants in the Dallas County Community College District's citywide African-American Read-In, which kicks off Black History Month, mourned the death of actor Ossie Davis. This year they will celebrate seven years of reading as well as Davis' legacy through presentations and a locally written production titled *A Prince Came Out of Egypt: A Tribute to Ossie Davis*.

The 2006 DCCCD African-American Read-In will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Majestic Theatre in Dallas. The program is free and open to the general public.

Families in particular and children ages 8 and older are invited. Seating is limited, however, and usually fills early because parents, youngsters and friends traditionally flock to the event.

"We would love to have the people of Carrollton come out," said Ann Hatch, director of media relations for DCCCD.

Guest readers include actor, author and director Avery Brooks, perhaps best known as Captain Sisko on *Star Trek: Deep Space 9*, and motivational speaker/author Johnny Wimbrey.

"The seventh African-American Read-In celebrates family reading and learning, the life of Ossie Davis and the fun that reading brings to us every day," said Carla Ranger, executive director of DCCCD's office of educational partnerships and founder of the Dallas African-American Read-In.

"Through the read-in, we share the joys of literature and the legacy of African-American writers with members of the community, creating a celebration of families and friends, based on books, stories, poetry and essays. We also want to encourage others to involve boys, young men, dads, uncles and their mentors so that males in our community will become more engaged in reading and literacy efforts."

DCCCD is partnering with Dallas-based Alliance Data, the 2006 presenting sponsor. Alliance Data — a leading provider of transaction, credit and marketing services — is an active corporate citizen through its Neighbor of Choice program and is committed to community initiatives that support education, health, welfare and civic enrichment.

"Alliance Data is honored to partner with the Dallas County Community College District as the presenting sponsor of the 2006 African-American Read-In," said Katrina Brooks, community relations manager. "We all know the importance that literacy plays in the success of our children. Exposing them to the contributions of African-American literature helps broaden their minds and educates them about the impact that African-American writers have had on our society."

A Prince Came Out of Egypt: A Tribute to Ossie Davis, written by Anyika McMillan-Herrod and directed by Monique Ridge-Williams, not only celebrates the life and legacy of the late actor and activist, but also those individuals he presented through his work: fathers, husbands, writers, artists and humanitarians.

Filled with music, poetry and writings by Davis, Ruby Dee, Julius Lester, Ernest Gaines and others, A Prince Came Out of Egypt features area artists from the Dallas Black Dance Theater, Percussion Things, Brent Nance and more.

Audience members will receive free T-shirts, canvas bags, books and other literacy incentives at the event.

“The real treasure they will take with them, however, will be the words — both written and spoken — shared by authors, readers, artists and actors, plus friendships that grow each year as a result of the read-in,” said Ranger. “DCCCD’s African-American Read-In is an extravaganza of creativity, culture and community.”

The idea for an African-American Read-In originated with Dr. Jerrie Scott, faculty member at the University of Memphis and a member of the Black Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English.

The event’s purpose is to make literacy a significant part of Black History Month. Since 2000, the caucus has documented a cumulative total of more than 1 million people who have participated in read-ins held across the country.

For more information, visit www.readin.dcccd.edu or call Ranger at 214-860-2005 or Allison Neal at 214-616-2965.

Online at:

http://www.dallasnews.com/s/dws/dn/neighbors/carrollton/news/stories/012806crn_cover.4a6af542.html