

# Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society

Volume 1, Issue 2, Fall 2005

## Inside this issue:

\* *Membership barbecue a success*

\* *New plans ahead for society*

\* *Youth help document local history!*

...and more!

*For more information regarding SMBHS activities or membership, call 269-873-2327*



## Society celebrates successes, future endeavors

Fall is upon us and as we nestle in, we reflect with a great sense of accomplishment on the activities of the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society over the past year.

In February we held our first major fundraiser, the African American Book Fair, in partnership with Waldenbooks and the Douglass Community Association. The book fair served as our introduction to the community and hopefully our future activities will garner the same enthusiastic support.

*Thanks to Renee Begnoche, for her assistance this summer!*

The Kalamazoo Community Foundation awarded us a grant to train young people to assist in documenting area African American history. The six-week History Detectives program began on October 8th at the Kalamazoo Public Library. (See more regarding History Detectives on Page 2).

We thank Kalamazoo College for sponsoring Renee Begnoche as a summer intern to assist in the development of the History Detectives program and the digitizing of photographs for our growing archives. We are gathering photos and other documents that represent the African American heritage in southwest Michigan. The collection will be housed at the Lewis Walker Institute at Western Michigan University and the Powell branch of the Kalamazoo Public Library.

More than a dozen members came out in support of our first annual members' barbecue, catered by chef and member, Howie Peak. Attendees took the opportunity to network and discuss ideas for future collaborations. Bobbe Taber of LifeWrite Services, attending as a guest, shared some of her ideas on writing memoirs and life stories. She will present a memoir writing workshop at our next bookfair, scheduled for February 18, 2006 at the Douglass Community Center.

### Family history research can begin with simple obituary notice.

There are dozens of clues in an obituary notice that would allow you to begin putting the leaves on your own family tree project.

Items to be found in an obituary include:

- 1- Person's maiden name
- 2- Parents' names
- 3- Place of birth, death

### 4- Siblings, children

5- Memberships, honors, military service, employment and education

6- Church membership, and more!

Once you have these simple leads, you can begin more detailed research at your local library, university archives, county records offices.

Good luck!

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## History Detectives: Uncovering our Past



Teaching students about history is one thing. Allowing them to be a part of uncovering it is what the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society plans to do through the History Detectives program.

The six-week program began Oct. 8th, and is funded through a grant from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

During the program students in grades middle through high school will meet on Saturdays at such places as the Kalamazoo Public Library's Local History Room and the Western Michigan University Archives. Local historians and scholars will train them in how to create their own history projects to share with the community.

One of the inspirations for the History Detectives project was the Martich Black History Collection which is housed at Willard Library in Battle Creek. The creators of the collection, Dorothy and Michael Martich of Battle Creek, have gathered dozens of volumes of newspaper clippings, photographs and historic documents chronicling the history of African Americans in Battle Creek.

At the end of the six weeks, the team will its research with the public and general membership of the SMBHS.

The research will be housed with the SMBHS archives at the Lewis Walker Institute and the Powell Branch of the Kalamazoo Public Library. Researchers, scholars, and history lovers will be free to consult the collection for information on the history and contributions of African Americans in southwest Michigan.



## Coming Events

- October 24, 2005 Membership Meeting
- November 19, 2005 History Detectives Present the "Evidence" to the Community
- January 24, 2006 Joint Program with Kalamazoo County Historical Society
- February 18 Annual African American Book Fair

## LOVE HISTORY? PROUD OF YOUR HERITAGE? WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Here are some ways:

1. If you have skills in videography or photography or have an interest in geneology research, you can volunteer to put your talents and ideas to work for the History Detectives program!
2. If you have photographs and memorabilia from your family and would like to make that a part of the black heritage collection, let us know. Your treasures will be copied and digitized and the originals returned to you.
3. Join the Society!

For more information on how to get involved, call 269/873-2327.

The next membership meeting of the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society is:  
Monday, October 24  
5:30 p.m.  
at the YWCA of Kalamazoo  
353 E. Michigan Avenue  
Bring your ideas! Learn of new developments.!

Don't allow our history to be lost for another generation.

Websites to help guide you through your family research project:

- \* *Abrams Foundation Historical Collection*
- \* *Ancestry Plus*
- \* *Census Data Browser*
- \* *Christine's African American Genealogy Website*
- \* *Civil War Genealogy Links*
- \* *U.S. GenWeb Project*
- \* *U.S. Census Bureau*
- \* *Local vital statistics, records.*
- \* *Library of Congress*
- \* *Rootsweb*
- \* *Ellis Island Immigration Records*

Link to these sites online by first linking to Kalamazoo Public Library Website:  
[www.kpl.gov](http://www.kpl.gov)