

combined for
over six hours of
music.



Alumni group plans to lift up county school

By ANN M. TABB
Starkville Daily News

For the first time in the history of Oktibbeha County Schools, a group of more than 100 alumni, faculty and staff came together Saturday night with the determination to help county school students realize their potential and to give back to future generations of students.

More than 100 alumni, faculty, staff and county administrators with some connection to B.L. Moor and Alexander High Schools over the years met for

their first fund-raiser banquet at the Ramada Inn, the largest of several meetings of the Educational Association of East Oktibbeha Schools (EAEOCS) in the past six months.

According to EAEOCS Coordinator Jacqueline Ellis, there are two major projects planned for the group, with one being an all-day Reunion Festival beginning at 9 a.m. on May 24 at East Oktibbeha High School.

Ellis has been the driving force for the group's organization after a devastating fire at the former B.L. Moor High in the summer of

2002.

Ellis, who lives in Atlanta, said she and her family wondered how they could help the students, so in August, she began calling alumni and planned meetings of the fledgling group.

"We feel that after all the students have been through, they deserve to be nurtured," said Ellis. "We want to give them a party that day."

The second upcoming project for the group is a landscaped amphitheater and picnic area.

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Happenings

Nutrition workshop set for Tuesday

In celebration of National Nutrition Month, the Even Start Family Literacy Program and Families First Resource Center will sponsor a WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) workshop featuring recipes and a tasting party. The workshop will be held Tuesday, March 25 from 11 a.m. to 12 noon, at the Emerson Family Center. To register or for

more information, please call 320-4607.

Starkville NAFRE to meet Thursday

The Starkville Chapter of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees meets at the Ramada at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday Mr. Nicky Yeatman Yeatman, Dietician with the Oktibbeha County Hospital will speak on "Healthy Eating for the

Group

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Still in the planning stages, the project at the high school would include 30-40 picnic

benches, class roster walls for alumni and an amphitheater, complete with lighting, sidewalks and more than 300 ornamental trees and shrubs.

"We want to create a relaxing appearance to the campus on the outside and an entertaining atmosphere for students. To do this, we will involve alumni, the community and the students at the high school."

To help plan the project, Ellis contacted the Small Town Center in the Architecture School at Mississippi State University for advice and the award winning research and design center has agreed to help.

Kimberly Brown, director of the Small Town Center, told the group that students at the non-profit center are planning to devote their time to the landscaping project in August and that in the meantime, alumni with special skills that range from bricklaying to grant writing were critically needed.

"The beauty of this project at East Oktibbeha is the way that the community can get involved to give the students a better education," said Brown, talking about the landscaping project. In a sense, it is a way to tell the high school students to reach higher, to show them the love that is there but at the same time, to tell them to excel as students."

Ellis said the group now have their own website for alumni living out of town and that interest has been generated across the nation among alumni of the county schools. Several sizable donations have already been received from out-of-town alumni who wish to help. Pictures from the banquet, project updates and group information will soon be posted online at www.eaeocs.org.

The group heard rousing talks from two influential alumni to graduate from B.L. Moor High School: Ethen Gillespie, a Loan Specialist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, delivered the motivational speech and Dr. Kenneth Stallings, Agricultural Professor and Chairman of the Alcorn State University

Agriculture Department delivered the keynote message.

Using humor, stories of second-hand books and childhood experiences growing up, Stallings implored the group that school, home and church are one and that past generations must build a bridge for future generations to cross.

"Move yourself to the side of the solution," said Gillespie. "Stop complaining and take action. Stop calling everybody to talk about everything that isn't happening, take action. By taking action, those actions will lift us all up, just like the saying that a rising tide lifts all boats."

The meeting was an opportunity for the group with a common bond to visit, to talk and to laugh and enjoy each others company.

R. L. Stevenson, lunchroom manager at B.L. Moor High School, said he remembers giving Stallings his chocolate milk many years ago.

"We've worked hard to serve you all in the lunchroom and it makes me feel good to see you do what you are doing," said Stevenson to the group, many who remembered his milk cart and the three pennies for milk while they were in school. "We had limited supplies and they weren't paying us nothing' back then. It really pleases me how well you are all doing."

Stevenson pledged \$100 donation Saturday night to help the cause, after Ellis asked attendees to contribute donations to the group's cause.

County school officials, including Dr. Walter Conley, School Board member Jossie Redmond and School Board President Curtis Snell were welcomed, along with alumni encompassing more than 60 years of shared heritage: from Pleasant Grove alumni in the 1950s and B.L. Moor and Alexander High School alumni ranging from the 1960's to students currently enrolled in county schools.

Several alumni helped Ellis organize the event and are active participants in the group: Herman Bush, Willie Thomas, Jossie Redmond, Rosella Harris Austin, Vivian McGee West, Dorothy Rice Johnson, Yvonne Ellis and Linda Harris Roby.

The group adjourned for committee signup, the collection of pledges and membership, and fellowship.

Razzie queen Madonna cleans up at worst-film awards

By DAVID GERMAIN
The Associated Press

actress with fellow pop queen
Britney Spears, who made her
starring debut in

supporting actress for her brief
cameo as a fencing instructor
in the James Bond flick "Die
Another Day" for which she