

The Macomb Daily

Winning King day art entry by Chippewa Valley student merges past, present and future

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Dayvonta' Howard's knowledge of Dr. Martin Luther King comes from history books.

But that doesn't mean the 18-year-old doesn't appreciate the slain civil rights leader's sacrifice.

"Everything I learned about the civil rights movement was in schools," said Howard, a senior at Chippewa Valley High School in Clinton Township. "My understanding is how things have changed.

"... I don't think (America) would be what it is if (King) didn't do what he did; if he didn't die for his cause."

That understanding is reflected in a prize-winning illustration Howard created that earned top prize in a high school art contest held in conjunction with the 25th anniversary Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Celebration.

Howard's artwork depicts King, President Barack Obama and a young girl, a reflection of what the artist sees as the past, present and future coming together. The drawing adorns the cover of the King Celebration program that will be distributed Monday night at the annual event held at The Royalty House in Warren.

The 2012 King celebration honors the Freedom Riders, who in 1961 risked their lives when they rode buses across state laws draw attention to illegal segregation laws still in effect in the Deep South. One of those who made the ride, the Rev. Richard Gleason, is keynote speaker for the King celebration.

Interfaith Center officials, with cooperation from the Macomb Intermediate School District, sponsored the art contest as a supplement to the event.

"We wanted (students) to learn about the Freedom Ride, Dr. King and their interpretation on how to keep the wheels of freedom moving forward," said the Rev. Michail Curro, executive director of the Interfaith Center for Racial Justice, sponsor of the King dinner.

Howard's work was chosen best among 19 entries.

"When I first saw that piece, that was my favorite, right off the bat," said Curro. "I like the hopefulness. It really projects hope."

Howard plans to continue his art studies, possibly at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit. His teacher, Wendelin Wilson, attended the same institution.

"I know what that college has to offer," Wilson said. "He's a perfect fit."

Howard admitted feeling a little "weird" when he saw his creation on the cover of the King celebration program, but that feeling gave way to pride.

"It feels good to be part of something," he said.

All 19 entries will be displayed electronically during the King celebration Monday, Curro said.

A limited number of tickets are still available for the 2012 Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Celebration. Tickets are \$40 each or a table of 10 for \$300. For information, call (586) 463-3675.