

The Macomb Daily

Interfaith Center ready for MLK Jr. Dinner

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For a quarter-century, the Interfaith Center for Racial Justice has worked to keep alive the legacy and the dream of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Next January's 25th anniversary King Holiday Celebration will be no different.

"Because it's our 25th anniversary, we wanted to celebrate in a way to draw (even more) attention to it," said the Rev. Michail Curro, executive director the Interfaith Center. "The more we get away from the civil rights movement and the more we get away from (Dr. King's) death each year, the less people know about him."

To that end, on Thursday the Interfaith Center will hold a special kick-off event to announce the 25th anniversary celebration and they'll do it with an effort of which King would be most pleased. Those who attend the kick-off event will be asked to donate toiletries and other personal care items to be distributed to the working poor. Donations might include laundry detergent, shampoo, bath soap, deodorant and toilet paper.

Organizers hope to fill a bus with the items and drive the vehicle to the Hope Center in Clinton Township for distribution. While food banks provide some of the needs, the collection of personal care items fills a specific void, Curro said.

"We felt this is something that's fallen through the cracks," he said.

The kick-off event is dubbed "Keep the Wheels of Freedom Turning," a reference to the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Riders, who risked their well-being and even their lives to travel throughout the South in voter registration drives in 1961.

One of those Freedom Riders, the Rev. Richard Gleason, will be the keynote speaker at the King Celebration on Jan. 16, 2012 at the Royalty House in Warren. Gleason is now an instructor at Macomb Community College.

Curro said the Interfaith Center also plans to enlist art students from Macomb County high schools to participate in the 25th anniversary by submitting their original works of art for display early next year leading up to and following the annual King dinner. The theme of the works of art must reflect the Freedom Riders, Curro said.

"(Students) need to learn about the Freedom Riders and learn about Dr. King (and) what we still need to do for the freedom movement," Curro said. "It's so important we educate people about where we came from and where we need to go."

Thursday's event will be held from 5 to 7:30 p.m. at the Macomb Intermediate School District administration building, 44001 Garfield Road, Clinton Township. The event is open to the public and admission is free, although those who attend are asked to donate personal care items.

For more information about the 25th anniversary Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Celebration, including Thursday's kick-off event, call the Interfaith Center for Racial Justice at (586) 463-3675; contact the Rev. Michael Curro via email at curroicrj@sbcglobal.net; or visit website www.icrj.org.