The Community of Concerned Citizens, in partnership with the City of Independence, recognized Dr. Martin Luther King Day with ceremonies Monday, January 18 at the Truman Memorial Building, 416 W. Maple Ave. The theme for this year’s celebration was “Content of our Character.”

The keynote speaker was Theresa Byrd, director of field services for the Jackson County Family Court Services. Byrd received a plaque from Nancy Harris of the Community of Concerned Citizens.

The celebration featured music by the Truman High School Jazz Band and the group FOCUS. An art exhibit featuring works from local schools and professional artists was on display.

The winning essays on the “Content of our Character” written by local high school and junior high school students were read.

The middle school essay winner was Rebecca Wallace, an eighth grader from Pioneer Ridge Middle School. The high school winner was Whitney Croucher of William Chrisman High School.

Byrd's career with the Family Court began in 1971 when she started as a part-

Go to City7.TV to view the program and speech by Theresa Byrd.

A candle-lighting ceremony was at the conclusion of the celebration.

Theresa Byrd, at right, was presented a certificate of appreciation after her speech by Nancy Harris.

The next time you need to get a flu shot in Independence, you’ll be able to schedule it through the Independence Health Department’s new online registration service.

Health Director Larry Jones said the Health Department has new electronic vaccine registration manager software to streamline the entire flu clinic process.

“This software allows for electronic registration and electronic data access which is expected to reduce wait times significantly,” Jones said.

This electronic system will provide public health officials with an accurate, reliable, centralized, easily accessible database of vaccine information. Another benefit will be faster access to an individual’s immunization record, which will be much more efficient with this system.

“People will be able to fill out a consent form online and print off a receipt to bring to the clinic,” Bridgette Casey, Health Department epidemiologist, said in explaining the process.

Once entered into the system, a person has 30 days to attend a clinic before their online registration expires.

Upon arriving at the clinic, people with a confirmation receipt will be put next in line to see a nurse. Those who are not registered in advance will have to do so at a laptop kiosk before they can get in the vaccination line.

“This could be especially helpful for families bringing in children,” Casey said. “Parents will no longer have to balance watching their children and filling out forms for the entire family.”
Historic Sites Volunteer Program Thriving

Independence Tourism Volunteer Coordinator Cathy Offutt is looking forward to a banner year, following a successful 2009 tourism season. Offutt reports that during the past year, 209 volunteers recorded more than 21,185 hours of service, completing more than 5,810 assignments.

This donation of labor equals a contribution to the City of $360,546. Offutt said the City is appreciative of these efforts, which are crucial to helping the City operate its historic sites. Those sites include the 1859 Jail and Marshal’s Home, 217 N. Main St.; Bingham-Waggoner Estate, 313 W. Pacific Ave.; Chicago & Alton Depot and National Frontier Trails Museum, both located at 318 W. Pacific Ave.; 1827 Log Courthouse, 107 W. Kansas Ave.; Pioneer Spring Cabin, Truman and Noland Roads; and Vaile Mansion, 1500 N. Liberty St.

In 2009, the ages of the historic sites volunteers spanned 8 decades, with the youngest being 12 and the oldest being 92. Courtney Sibert, a student at St. John LaLande School in Blue Springs, finished her first year giving tours at the Bingham-Waggoner Estate. The most senior member Virginia Hoare, also completing her first year, welcomes guests and sells admission to the Vaile Mansion.

For groups who would like to learn more about the City’s historic tourism sites, as well as volunteer opportunities, Tourism offers a free 20- to 30-minute presentation through the Volunteer Voices Speakers Bureau. Schedule the program at least two weeks in advance by calling Offutt at 325-7112.

On Wednesday, March 24, volunteers can meet with other volunteers at the Bingham-Waggoner Estate from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. to share a potluck lunch. Orientation training for the upcoming tourism season will follow.

Volunteers, hospitality industry employees and the general public are all invited to attend the next “No Problem” Hospitality workshop, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, March 26 at the National Frontier Trails Museum. The $25 cost includes lunch on the Square and afternoon mini-tours of the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, 500 W. U.S. 24 Highway, Bingham-Waggoner Estate, and Vaile Mansion. As always, volunteers attend for free. To RSVP for either the potluck/orientation or the hospitality workshop, call Offutt at 325-7112 or email coffutt@independmo.org.

Although several of the City’s historic attractions close for the winter until April, two homes will open for annual spring events in March.

On Saturday, March 20, the Bingham-Waggoner Estate presents the “Sugar and Spice and Everything Nice” luncheon and fashion show. Beginning at noon, guests will be served a catered lunch as men, women and children model the latest fashions provided by Dillard’s. The event will be informally modeled and staff dressed as a Victorian maid and butler will be in attendance. Guests are invited to dress in period attire or hats. Tickets are $20 per person. Reservations to Jean Kimball at 305-3712 are required. More information about the Vaile Mansion can be found at the web site, www.vailemansion.org.

In March, the U.S. Census Bureau will mail forms for the 2010 Census to every household in the country. A complete count is important for the City of Independence because the federal government will allocate more than $300 billion to states and communities based, in part, on census data.

With only 10 questions, the 2010 Census is one of the shortest in history and takes just 10 minutes to complete. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share any information collected with anyone, including other federal agencies and law enforcement entities.

Watch for your form in the mail. For more information contact Community Development Director Jennifer Clark at 816-325-7109 or visit the web site at http://oa.mo.gov/mocensus/.
The new online registration, because it will require less paperwork at the clinics, will speed up the entire process. “We want to encourage vaccination by making the process as quick and easy as possible,” Andrew Warlen, Health Department Code Compliance manager, who worked in development of the process, said.

“This new system will allow us to vaccinate more people, and the more people we can get vaccinated, the more protection we provide to our community,” Warlen said. “I admire those who have spent hours in line to get vaccinated to protect their families. This will help us provide that same protection but with less waiting time.”

Jones said to get this system up and running, the software developer is providing the Health Department with 15 laptop computers.

Those interested in attending a H1N1 flu clinic hosted by the Independence Health Department are encouraged to fill out their registration forms online before going to the clinic. It is highly recommended for everyone to print off the electronic registration receipts and bring them to the clinic. The forms and latest date for a clinic can be found online at www.independencemo.org/health.

For more information call the Health Department’s H1N1 hotline (816) 325–6300.

The City of Independence has issued a reminder to citizens turning 65, and some military veterans, that they are eligible for a vehicle license fee waiver.

Jim Harlow, Independence finance director, said the City licenses (formerly City stickers) are included on personal property tax bills issued by Jackson County. While Independence does not levy a personal property tax, it does use this tax bill to assess and collect the vehicle license fee.

The cost for vehicle licenses are: $6 for trucks and vans, $5 for automobiles and $4 for motorcycles.

The license fee is waived on one vehicle for an owner who has reached the age of 65 prior to January 1 of the tax year. Waivers are also authorized for honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability.

Waiver requests with supporting documentation such as a copy of your driver’s license or another official form indicating date of birth, can be submitted in person or by mail to Jackson County, Division of Finance, Collection Department, 415 E. 12th St., Kansas City, MO 64106; or the Jackson County Courthouse Annex, 308 W. Kansas, Independence, MO 64050. For more information call the Tax Payer Assistance Line at 881-3232.

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8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Second Saturday Of Each Month
Opens for 2010 in March!
875 Vista Avenue
325-7623
Truman Road
East of M-291,
One Mile North
On Vista Avenue
Next to Animal Shelter
Trash: Cars, $10;
Vehicles Larger Than Car, $15;
Trailers 8 Feet or Longer, $25
Brush: Limbs, Firewood, Bushes, Stumps. No Leaves or Grass: $10 per load
Major Appliances: $15 Each
Batteries & Lawnmowers: Free
Tires: Car, $1; Mounted Car, $3;
Truck, $4; Mounted Truck, $10;
Farm/Tractor, $15
Residential vehicles only. no commercial. No vehicles larger than a pick-up truck. Proof of residency required.
This Spring Think Rain Barrels, Rain Gardens for Your Yard

With spring just around the corner it’s time to start thinking about ways to help reduce your storm water runoff. The old saying, “April Showers Bring May Flowers” is true, but spring showers also bring flooded creeks and storm sewer systems.

Water Pollution Control Director Dick Champion said to help reduce storm water runoff, rain barrels and rain gardens are good assets. Rain gardens slow storm water so that it can percolate into the ground, and help to trap sediment and some pollutants.

When planting a rain garden, location is important.

“Pick a low-lying area in your yard where the most runoff flows,” Champion said. “But do not put your garden where water ponds.” When water collects in an area that means the soil is slow to absorb water. And that would probably drown your flowers.”

Make sure that you put your rain garden at least 10 feet away from your house to avoid basement flooding or foundation damage.

There are many types of flowers you can plant in a rain garden.

Native perennial plants are ideal because they are great at conserving soil and water. They do not need fertilizer to thrive and are long lasting because they are adapted to local weather and conditions and can bring butterflies and birds into a garden.

A few native plants that work in this region include Cardinal Flower, Purple Cornflower, Black-eyed Susan and Prairie Blazing Star.

You may want a rain barrel to water your gardens. Rain barrels attach to the downspouts on your home and collect rain water from your roof. You can then save the rain water for later use on lawns or gardens.


Contact WPC at 325-7711 for a free brochure on how to make a rain garden or a rain barrel and for a list of 10 native plants for the Kansas City region.

Fairmount-Carlisle Tax Abatement Program

The process of revitalizing neighborhoods in northwest Independence continues. Community Development Director Jennifer Clark said the City is accepting applications for the Fairmount-Carlisle Parcel Specific Tax Abatement Program.

“The 353 plan offers residents an incentive to rehabilitate their home by offering a tax break,” Clark said. “Program participants will be freed of property taxes for the first 10 years and receive 50 percent abatement for the following 15 years if they invest a specified amount in upgrading their property.”

The Fairmount-Carlisle 353 Redevelopment Plan, which is designed to increase commercial and residential development in Northwest Independence by allowing tax abatement for redeveloped property, was approved by the City Council in February 2007 and was incorporated in May 2007 by the Missouri Secretary of State. In 2007 there were 36 properties abated, 28 in 2008 and 37 in 2009. There are more than 160 properties currently undergoing repairs through the program.

Clark said the Fairmount-Carlisle 353 Tax Abatement area, which is comprised of the Fairmount and Carlisle neighborhoods and portions of the Mt. Washington and Bundschu neighborhoods, is located in northwest Independence. The program expanded south of Truman Road to 18th Street in November 2008.

The area is bounded generally on the far west along Brookside Avenue; the northern boundary of the City and along US 24 High-way, east along Forest Avenue and south of Truman Road to 18th Street.

Commercial and multi-family property guidelines are nearing completion and will allow owners of these properties to participate in the program. Real estate property taxes of improved properties will be abated for 10 years.

Applications for the Fairmount-Carlisle Parcel Specific Tax Abatement Program are available at three locations: City Hall, Community Development Department, 111 East Maple; Fairmount Community Center, 217 S. Cedar; and Curt’s Famous Meats, 10101 Truman Rd.

To participate or for more detailed explanations of the renovation requirements contact Tax Abatement Administrator Pat Robinson at (816) 325-7426. Presentations are held at 6 p.m. the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Fairmount Community Center.

Watch City Meetings On Streaming Video

City Council meetings and study sessions are available as live and archived streaming video on the City’s Web site, www.independencemom.org. Each live City 7 TV broadcast is available online during the 6 p.m. Monday City Council meetings. An archive of the program is available on the site the next morning for viewing 24 hours a day. Archived videos are available for a few months following their posting. If you do not have a computer but would like to purchase a copy of a Council meeting call 325-7019.