Black History Month Programs
by Anne H. Coleman

The Mary Livermore Library celebrated Black History Month in 2008 with several exciting events.

The celebration began February 4 with a series of activities commemorating the 19th National African American Read-In. The Read-In is cosponsored nationally by The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Black Caucus of NCTE. The overall goal of the Read-In is to make the celebration of African American literacy a traditional part of Black History Month activities. Locally, Read-In activities at UNCP Pembroke were cosponsored by the Friends of the Library, the Office of Multicultural and Minority Affairs (OMMA), and the Center for Leadership and Service’s First Book Program.

During the February 4th day of celebration, three events were held on the UNCP campus. The day began with a Children’s Hour where African American stories were read to 26 three- and four-year-old youngsters from the Shining Stars Preschool and Daycare. Hannah Simpson, Vice President, UNCP SGA; Jamee Hunt, Miss UNCP 2008; Jamie Goins, YIELD Project Director, Hawkeye Indian Cultural Center; and Derving Rios, UNCP student; and Miss North Carolina 2007, Jamee Hunt, Miss UNCP 2008; and Trin-A-Thoughtz, North Carolina NAACP House Poet, gathered to deliver spirited and inspiring readings of African American literature.

In the afternoon, a panel discussion of the book Come On People: On the Path from Victims to Victors by Drs. Bill Cosby and Alvin Poussaint was held in the University’s student center. Faculty, staff, and students shared their insights on the book. They discussed at great length the broad implications of the book and the need for each individual to commit to helping someone else, especially the children and young people of our nation.

In the evening, an oral readings program was held in the Library. A diverse group of people, including Jessica Jacobs, Miss North Carolina 2007; Jamee Hunt, Miss UNCP 2008; and Trin-A-Thoughtz, North Carolina NAACP House Poet, gathered to deliver spirited and inspiring readings of African American literature.

On the evening of February 11, the Library hosted a presentation by Dr. Barbara Trepagnier, a sociology professor from Texas State University and author of Silent Racism: How Well-Meaning White People Perpetuate the Racial Divide. Dr. Trepagnier also discussed her book at an afternoon presentation in the student center. Dr. Trepagnier’s appearance at UNCP was cosponsored by the Mary Livermore Library and OMMA.

On February 19, the Library hosted a program featuring Dr. Melton McLaurin, author of The Marines of Montford Point: America’s First Black Marines. Dr. McLaurin discussed his research and book on this historic North Carolina military installation. His book and documentary film tell the story of the African American Marines who integrated the last all-white branch of the U.S. military in 1942.

On February 21, the Library and OMMA cohosted a second Children’s Hour. Volunteers read African American stories to a group of three- and four-year-old children from the Greengrove Headstart Program in Fairmont. Readers for this event were Jamee Hunt, Miss UNCP 2008; Jamie Goins, YIELD Project Director, Hawkeye Indian Cultural Center; Hannah Simpson, Vice President, UNCP SGA; Derving Rios, UNCP student; and Robert Canida, Director of OMMA. The youngsters particularly enjoyed having Mr. Rios read them a story in Spanish about a rainbow-colored world and translating the Spanish words for them. Preston Siler, also a UNCP student, led the students in some of their favorite songs like “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” and “Old MacDonald Had a Farm.” Mr. Canida and Dr. Elinor Foster, Dean of Library Services, welcomed the youngsters and their teachers to the UNCP campus.

The programs celebrating Black History Month were well-attended and audience participation was spirited and thought-provoking. Everyone involved, presenters and attendees, expressed their appreciation of the activities and are looking forward to next year’s programs. Plans are already underway to repeat some of the events, like the National African American Read-In, and to line up equally exciting presenters for Black History Month in 2009.
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Robert Canida, Anne Coleman, Jamee Hunt, Jessica Jacobs, Vivian Oxendine, Dr. Jane Haladay, Dr. Elinor Foster, Trin-A-Thoughtz, Theo Vo, Pia Jessup, Shernin Rice, and Jamal Porter were participants in an evening program in the Mary Livermore Library on February 4. Photo provided by Robert Canida.