



National Black Deaf Advocates

2008 Midwestern Regional Black Deaf Advocates Conference

Second Biennial Midwestern Regional BDA Conference
Kentucky International Convention Center
Louisville, KY
July 17-19, 2008

The 2008 Second Biennial Midwestern Regional Black Deaf Advocates Conference was a resounding success! The theme of the conference “No Struggle, No Progress” by Frederick Douglass marked the first time in the history that the Kentucky Black Deaf Community hosted this type of event. Kentucky Black Deaf Advocates, which was established as the 31st Chapter affiliated with NBDA on August 6, 2005, hosted the conference at the Kentucky International Convention Center in the heart of downtown Louisville, Kentucky surrounded by the Muhammad Ali Center, Fourth Street Live, and Louisville Bat Museum.

The conference drew a hundred of participants from neighboring Midwestern states’ chapters including Chicagoland BDA, Cleveland BDA, Detroit BDA, St. Paul/Minneapolis BDA, Indianapolis BDA and future potential chapters of Flint, MI and Milwaukee, WI! Many participants drove to the conference from as far as Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington D.C. and several states outside the Midwest region showed love and support.

The workshops offered various topics for participants to chose from beginning with Friday morning concurrent workshops entitled “More Effective Teams: What’s In It For You?” which explored basic information on building better and more effective teamwork. “Understanding NBDA Regional System” focused on understanding how the regional system works. Crystal Schwartz’s presentation “RAP =Rhythm and Poetry:” was a packed room provided interactive opportunity for the participants to feel the music beats rhythmically while signing poetry and lyrics.

Panel discussion and questions/answers session with NBDA officers and Board members was the most anticipated part of the conference where participants in a jam-packed room were invited to address comments and questions to the panel consisted of Vice President, Benro Ogunyipe, Treasurer Martina Moore, Secretary Cory Parker, Midwestern Representative Kim Wassenaar, and Southern Representative Marilyn Edwards to discuss various topics related to NBDA, regional system, and local chapters. Ernest E. Garrett III moderated a successful panel discussion.

On Saturday afternoon the conference attendees took the opportunity to watch the popular deaf movie “Wrong Game”, an all-sign ASL film in a theatre-style capacity

and many conference participants voluntarily visited and toured the Muhammad Ali Center, a few blocks away from the conference site, which is a museum paying tribute to the life and achievements of boxing icon and legend Muhammad Ali.

During the banquet, keynote speaker Miss Black Deaf America, Jonelle Thames received standing ovation after speaking in leadership and guidance for the future Deaf African-American youth. Broadway-style theater play was played choreographed by Brenda Gates kept audience pleasurable while many enjoyed the taste of southern-style chicken dinner. Deaf Magician Morgan gave showstopper magic performance interactive with the audience that drove them to get off their seats. KYBDA President, Bobby Green Sr. presented awards to the selected members of KYBDA for their dedication and excellence services of black deaf community in the state of Kentucky.

Exhibitors were invited to provide the needs of services and programs for the conference participants including: Hamilton Relay, Hands-on VRS, Sorenson Communications, and Sprint Relay.

New supporters of the conference were emerged: Birnbaum Interpreting Services (www.bisvrs.com), a deaf-owned company located in Maryland; Harris Communications; Deaf Life (www.deaflife.com), deaf community's own magazine reading for parents, teachers, students, everybody; and Rochester Institute of Technology/NTID (www.rit.edu/NTID).

The success of the conference was made possible by the generous contributions of the sponsors: Hamilton Relay, Harris Communications, Inc, Kentucky Association of the Deaf, Kentucky Commission on Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, McLendon-Kogut Reporting Service, Inc, Powered by Purple, Sorenson Communications, and Sprint Relay.

During the general and election meeting, Sharon D. White of Frankfort, KY and Dale Moore of Detroit, MI were elected as the new Midwestern Representative and Alternate Representative respectively. Detroit BDA won the bid to host the 2010 Third Biennial Midwestern Regional Black Deaf Advocates Conference.

Conference report submitted by:
Sharon D. White
2008 Conference Chair
Unique1nMe@aol.com