



## SOB Celebrates Black Heritage Month

By John McKay

A day of praise, culture, music and history launched the State Office Building's fourth annual Black Heritage Month celebration.

The day kicked off with the "cultural exchange" in Room G-19 with several vendors selling jewelry and serving traditional foods. Hartford Hospital also hosted an informational booth on sickle cell, high blood pressure, diabetes and other health issues.

A much-heralded event was the unveiling of the U.S. Post Office's Marian Anderson Black Heritage Month postage stamp and was sponsored by the five major agencies of the SOB: The Departments of Administrative Services, Agriculture, Consumer Protection, Education, and Public Works.

DAS Commissioner Linda Yelmini spoke at the ceremony and said, "This is such a great event, and I'm really impressed with the tributes being performed here today. It's a wonderful camaraderie that has been generated by this celebration, and I look forward to enjoying the day with you."

Much of the celebration focused on Marian Anderson's role in history.

She was born February 27, 1897, in Philadelphia and at the early age of six started singing in the family's church choir. Recognizing her talent and her need to study with professional teachers, members of her community took it upon themselves to raise the funds for her musical training.

Aware of Anderson's growing reputation, President Franklin Roosevelt invited her to



**Hartford Postmaster Chu Falling Star presents a commemorative plaque featuring the Marian Anderson stamp to Black Heritage month committee members Isabelle McKinney, Natalie Shipman, Mario Efici, Holly Hart, deLinda Brown-Jagne, and Barbara Brown.**

sing for guests at a White House dinner party in 1936.

Three years later, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), refused to make its Washington venue, Constitution Hall, available for Anderson's Easter concert due to a 'white artists only' policy. As a result, Eleanor Roosevelt resigned from the DAR, and on Easter Sunday, 1939, Anderson gave a historic and highly symbolic outdoor performance before 75,000 people at the Lincoln Memorial. Her performance was broadcasted via radio nationwide.

Anderson went on to become the first black singer to appear on the stage of New York's Metropolitan Opera. She performed at the inaugural ceremony for President Dwight D. Eisenhower's second term and for the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy. Anderson died on April 8, 1993.

SOB employees recognized Anderson in a musical tribute when Barbara Brown, Mario Efici, Natalie Shipman and Mary Taylor opened with the song "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

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Later, Taylor sang again and performed a powerful medley titled "A Journey."

Another tribute to Anderson was a poem by SOB employee deLinda Brown-Jagne titled, "I Sing."

Hartford Postmaster Chu Falling Star gave the Black Heritage Month Committee a special edition plaque of the Marian Anderson Stamp before the official unveiling of the larger display stamp with Commissioner Fleming.

"This is the largest turnout I've seen for a Black Heritage Month celebration," said Falling Star during her remarks.



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M. Jodi Rell  
Governor

Linda J. Yelmini  
Commissioner

Donna J. Micklus  
Editor

Visit our website at [www.das.state.ct.us](http://www.das.state.ct.us)

**More photos on next page!**



Deputy Commissioner Anna Ficeto thanked **Teresa Dupont** for subscribing her to the WIN newsletter. "I'm very impressed by the content (and the fact that you get it out weekly). I'm sure there's a great deal of work involved. Great job!" Carol Wilson also complimented Teresa stating, "It is amazing this is published weekly with new content every week. I agree with your sentiments completely! Way to go Teresa."

The following message was sent to **Maureen Friedman** from Purchasing Officer 2 Don Knybel from the Department of Revenue Services: "Maureen, attached is the bid I was talking to you about...as you can see, I received a total of 15 bids! And it was a Set-Aside bid...I received bids from Set-Aside vendors I never knew were out there. I encourage anyone who is not on the DAS portal to sign up immediately...It is very user-friendly and will save the state money. The Portal class yesterday and today's Purchasing Forum were excellent with a wealth of great information to help in our daily work...I give you guys a lot of credit for helping us all out here in the purchasing world."

Teresa Dupont extended her thanks to **Michael Guimond** and **Roy Wynne** of the DAS Print Shop. "I was so amazed at how quickly they reacted to my 'rush' request! From our phone conversation, to the speedy delivery of the numerous documents that were needed for the Procurement Forum on the next day, Mike and Roy were helpful, professional and did what it took to get the job done and did it well! Also, special thanks to **Peter Varhol**, for all the help he gave us for the Procurement Forum. With his never-ending assistance (and patience), Peter's

efforts played a major role in the success of this forum. Thanks for a great job!"

Doreen Kearney applauded **Barbara Jenec** and **Tanya Grant** for all of the help they have provided on the Birth to Three Private Insurance program. "Their efforts have made everyone else's job a lot easier. Kudos to **Barbara** for her hard work in helping me catch up with all of the Anthem EOB's. I realize that she has been thrown a curve and it will take a while to get it all up to date. Barbara's work is deeply appreciated."

Nina Ritson thanked **Jose Baez** "for creating the shared drive between the DAS Print Shop and the Communications Office and for making our drive available to me when I am working at the shop. It may seem like a small item - but it makes a world of difference for me handling files between the two offices. I would also like to thank **Anna Tara** for her expertise and time spent setting up the new PC for the Print Shop, connecting the (forgotten) scanner and making sure all applications printed to our copiers."

Carol Wilson wanted to share the success story of one of our Connecticut Small Businesses, C&C Janitorial out of West Hartford, CT. "Not only are they reaping success from the State contract for janitorial supplies, but one of their distributors, Simoniz out of Bolton, CT has also had success from this business connection. Thanks to **Pamela Anderson** for her efforts in putting this contract together and to **Meg Yetishefsky** for connecting this and many other SBE/MBE suppliers on this contract and others."

Isabelle McKinney thanked **John McKay** for his assistance with the Black History Month activities. "This is the fourth year that we've worked together on the SOB Black Heritage Month event and it's been a wonderful experience for me—I cannot say thank you enough. Again, you made us look so good—your awesome! John, your support is greatly appreciated!"

Isabelle McKinney also thanked **Nina Ritson** for her help with Black History Month. "We appreciate your calm assistance with getting the programs printed for the SOB Black Heritage Month event—all I can say is thank you, thank you. Nina, please thank the **Print Shop** folks for doing such a fabulous job with the printing of the programs and the turnaround time was phenomenal."

## *hats off*

By **Cindy Rusczyk**

Cynthia Shea "just wanted to pass along congratulations to all the **DAS employees** that were involved in the Black History Month celebration that took place today. The program was not only informative, but served to inspire us all. Congratulations to everyone involved!"

Isabelle McKinney applauded **Peter Varhol** for his contribution to Black History Month stating: "We are so appreciative of the *zeal* that you put forth to stick with us until the job was done. It was a joy to work with you and you certainly made our job much easier. We thank you so much. Take care!"

# Capitol Notes: *The 2005 Legislative Session*

By Nina Ritson



Now that the session is in full swing, we checked back in with our Legislative Liaison, Andrea Keilty for an update.

“There are numerous bills that have been raised that would affect DAS, most notably in the areas of ethics, contracting, and employment,” Keilty reported.

The four bills that DAS had proposed are moving ahead. The Government Administration & Elections Committee held a public hearing on the bills on February 14. Our own Henry Jovanelly and Jim Neil testified on behalf of the bills.

Jovanelly testified in support of Senate Bill 1043, *An Act Establishing State Claim Intercept Procedures*. This bill would allow DAS to collect unpaid debts, not only from lawsuit proceeds, as we are able to now, but also from settlement money that debtors receive before they file their claims in court. As was expected, we will have to overcome some concerns that the insurance industry has with the bill if we want to get it through the legislature.

Neil testified in support of the other three DAS bills: House Bill 6666, *An Act Protecting the Integrity of the Procurement Process*; House Bill 6667, *An Act Improving the Contractor Prequalification Program*; and Senate Bill 1041, *An Act Concerning Obsolete Provisions in the DAS Statutes*.

Of the numerous bills Keilty is monitoring, DAS has concerns with several in particular.

This week, Carlos Velez testified against one bill that would require all

information and data on how the program is working before we expand it so drastically.”

DAS is also opposed to House Bill 6644, *An Act Concerning Group Insurance for Housing Owned by Non-Profits*. Aimee Gagnon, the Program Administrator for DAS’s Master Insurance Program, testified against this bill last week. Basically, nonprofit organizations want to add their housing units to the insurance pool that Gagnon’s program runs for the Connecticut Housing Authorities.

DAS is against this bill because it will increase the cost of insurance for the Housing Authorities.

“The big news is still contract reform,” Keilty reiterated.

“Both the Governor and the Democratic leadership have ideas about how to reform the contracting process state-

*As I said at the beginning of my remarks, I was going to do what is necessary and what is right. I was going to level with you and with the people of Connecticut. And I was going to tell it like it is. Well here it is: this budget has some painful, but necessary cuts. It has some painful, but necessary tax increases. It rightly keeps spending to about the level of inflation. It rightly addresses problems that have been debated but not acted upon for too long. But it does so in a balanced way, reflecting respect for our taxpayers. In the coming weeks I know that we will work well together, as we find common ground and use common sense, to implement this budget.*

Excerpt from Governor M. Jodi Rell’s  
Budget Address  
February 9, 2005

construction subcontractors who perform state work with a value of more than \$25,000 to become prequalified by DAS before they can bid on jobs.

“We are against this bill for a number of reasons,” Keilty explained.

“Primarily, we are concerned that this bill will disproportionately hurt small companies and will freeze them out of state jobs. Also, our Contractor Prequalification Program is new – we just kicked it off last October. We believe it makes sense to get more

wide. Right now, it looks like we will most likely end up with a Contracting Standards Board that will have the authority to both create a uniform procurement code for all state agencies, and review and terminate problematic contracts as the Board becomes aware of them. What else ends up in that bill, however, is anybody’s guess.”

Our eyes will remain on the Capitol throughout this busy time, and we will continue to keep you posted as events develop and unfold!

# What's New on the Web ?

By John McKay

With over three million hits, the DAS website is growing by leaps and bounds in response to customers' needs, adding information on almost a daily basis.

The **DAS Contracting Portal** continues to grow with new registrants and, in complying with Governor Rell's Executive Order Number 3, makes DAS the state's single source for all state bids, RFP's and eventually, contracts. Eighty executive branch agencies are now using the portal. A new feature to the enrollment process now allows regis-

trants to modify their own accounts.

"If a contact name or number changes or there's a new address, they can handle those modifications themselves," said Web guru Bill Skyrme. "Makes my job a little bit easier," he added.

Meg Yetishefsky's **Supplier Diversity** unit is working on a new look for their page. "We're focusing on making it more customer friendly," said Yetishefsky. "Our website is the first place our customer go for questions, and information."

The **Workers' Compensation** Unit is also about to unveil its new website. With information on how to handle claims, contact numbers and other important information.

"We expect the website to be a big help to our office not only in our everyday efforts but giving us a 24/7 presence to our customers," said Director Joe Prevuznak.

The DAS website now hosts the state's housing voucher program. It allows state housing authorities to advertise openings for Section 8 Housing. Similar to Procurement's bidder notification system, customers can be automatically e-alerted when housing opportunities arise.

"The website is really becoming our first impression to citizens and agencies alike," said Skyrme. "As long as we can provide what they're looking for, they'll keep coming back."

Three million and going strong!

## Another Success Story for Small Business

Just ask C & C Janitorial in West Hartford, a vendor on the new state contract for janitorial supplies. Not only are they reaping rewards from the contract, but one of their distributors, Simoniz out of Bolton has also benefited from this business connection. C&C were so grateful, they

wrote to the Governor's office and to Pam Anderson in Procurement Services. Both Anderson and Meg Yetishefsky are to be congratulated for their efforts to include this company and many other small and minority-owned businesses on state contracts.

*February 21, 2005*

*Dear Pam:*

*We would really like to express our excitement in working on the new State of Connecticut contract for janitorial supplies. We believe it should help us create several new jobs for Connecticut residents. This contract is helping our purchasing volume with our manufacturers and vendors, specifically, a State manufacturer, Simoniz located in Bolton, CT.*

*This contract award has also given us the opportunity to service not only all State facilities, but also many subdivisions as well. We are sure as our name becomes better known through our efforts, we believe our services will increase to all areas in need of our products. In 2004, our sales increased by over 1 million dollars, a significant amount of this increase is directly related to business with the State of Connecticut.*

*We will continue to bring innovative ideas in the area of cleaning and maintenance to help State facilities be as cost efficient as possible. Within these efforts we also will continue to be as competitive as possible in order to be fiscally responsible to the State budget.*

*Sincerely,*

*Grace Café  
President*

# News Bits

## LOOK OUT LOTUS NOTES !

Don't be surprised if you get an email from Bill Gates soon. DAS' MIS unit will be changing the agencies email software from Lotus Notes to Microsoft Outlook in late March.

"Outlook puts us more in sync with the rest of Connecticut's executive branch agencies and give us some flexibility as well," said MIS' Rick Miarecki.

When the exchange happens, employees will find their emails from the last 30 days in their inbox. Within the first 30 days of the transfer, all saved emails will be transferred into Outlook. DAS' current distribution lists, as well as access to other state agency distribution lists, will also be migrated to Outlook.

And not to worry...many of Lotus Notes' features, including the DAS Photo Directory, and other reference materials will still be available to employees.

MIS is working on training classes for employees unfamiliar with Outlook. "It's pretty self-explanatory, but we'd like to give a brief overview of the program for anyone unfamiliar with the software," said Miarecki.

*The following article appeared in the March 1 edition of the Record-Journal:*

### Town, chamber want to help businesses get state contracts By Caroline D. Porter, Record-Journal staff

CHESHIRE — The town and the chamber of commerce have a new opportunity for local businesses — they're offering a seminar to teach businesses how to register to apply for state contracts and to advertise their services with the state in general.

Maureen Friedman, contract team leader for the state Department of Administrative Services, and Meg Yetishfsky, director of the state Supplier Diversity Program, will speak on March 16 at 7:30 a.m. at Cheshire Town Hall, 84 S. Main St.

The presentation will include:

- How to register your business as a vendor
- How to find opportunities on the DAS Web site and the kinds of products and services listed
- How to be certified as a small or minority business enterprise

More than 30 Cheshire businesses are presently registered with the state.

The two women, especially Friedman, will give a step-by-step presentation on how to use the DAS Web site.

"People worry about all the paperwork," said Mary Rossi, executive director of the chamber. "It's so easy to do right online. We'll see that when she does her demonstration." The state gives special opportunities to both small businesses and those owned by members of minorities. Small businesses are defined as those with less than \$10 million in sales.

The Web site also includes business opportunities with schools and nonprofit organizations. There is no cost to use the site.

Businesses need not be from Cheshire to attend the seminar. "It can be someone in the purchasing department, the one in charge of business development, that comes," Rossi said. "Or they can bring more than one from their company. It's worth their investment of time for an hour to see how it works."

There is no charge to attend the program, but registration is required. Call the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce at (203) 272-2345 or the Economic Development Office at 271-6670.



...our strength is in our differences

# Happenings

## Diversity Double Feature

By Maureen Friedman

The Diversity Council is pleased to announce a “Diversity Double Feature”, which will be a screening of two short films along with an open discussion period afterwards.

You may remember hearing about these movies from a previous *DAS Times* article several months ago. At the time of the article, we had one of the movies, *The Lunch Date*, in our possession and did not expect any difficulty getting the other one. In truth, it proved to be quite a challenge to get our hands on the film, *Bill Cosby on Prejudice*. As a result, the event was put on hold.

The good news is that we now have both films.

Diversity Council Chairperson Isabelle McKinney learned that the Department of Correction (DOC) in Cheshire has a library that contains, among other things, an extensive

video collection. Julia Traver, Librarian at DOC was kind enough to share the library resources with us.

Here’s a recap of the films we will show:

The first movie is a 1990 Academy Award winning film for Best Short Film, Live Action called *The Lunch Date*. Stranded in a train station, a well-to-do white woman, through a series of events, comes face to face with her own prejudices and stereotypes as she navigates through a big-city railroad station. This 10-minute film by Adam Davidson gently explores ideas about fear, prejudice and stereotyping. An interesting point to note is that the entire film takes place without any spoken words.

The second film in our double feature is *Bill Cosby on Prejudice*. Cosby, as the man on the street, systematically disowns the human race. He gathers all the typical clichés and stereotypes about particular groups of people into one long monologue. Cosby expresses just about every prejudice ever thought or spoken, creating a super-bigot who doesn’t like Blacks, Mexicans, Jews, Japanese, Puerto Ricans, Indians,

the Irish, the Scots, old people, kids, women, Midwesterners, Easterners - no minority group is left out.

“Just get rid of them,” Cosby says in this 24-minute film made in 1972.

We are also pleased to announce that the employees from the Department of Public Works will join us at our “Diversity Double Feature”. This collaboration will allow the diversity message in these movies to get out to both DAS and DPW employees at the same time.

Watch for a Diversitygram that will publicize the date, time and location for this diversity event. Please plan to attend!