

Expanding Y leadership

Blacks taking on larger role

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Deval said

Deval has been with the YMCA for 24 years. He worked 17 years in Chicago and six in Charlotte. Deval was recruited to work at the University YMCA as the branch executive. "I would like to believe I am a lifelong YMCA professional. I would like to be a chief executive officer of a large urban YMCA in an urban city like Charlotte. I am happy in my current role."

The history of African Americans' involvement with the Charlotte YMCA dates back to the Second Street branch built in 1936 and still stands today.

Another was built in 1950 at Third and Caldwell streets, which is now the

McCrorey YMCA, named after Henry L. McCrorey, a former president at Johnson C. Smith University. African Americans could not attend the Central YMCA (now the Dowd YMCA) until 1965. In recent years, there has been a push for black leadership in non-African American neighborhoods.

Law spent his childhood hanging out at the Dowd YMCA, which sparked an interest in the organization. Today, his job includes implementing a diversity plan for staff, volunteers and members.

"I am a little biased because I actually grew up at the Y," he said.

"I feel it is a privilege to be a leader in an organization like the Y. It aligns me with my personal position, which is helping others."

Law has implemented Y programs for children to

seniors. "My first job created was actually called Y Pals," said Law, who has a background in social work. "The Y Pals is like a Big Brother Big Sister program, except working with court-involved kids."

He has implemented Success By 6 now called Strengthening Neighbors, preschool programs, and a program entitled Good Neighbors at the Johnston and McCrorey YMCAs.

This program is for mothers with multiple preschool programs at the Johnston and McCrorey branches.

Law's ultimate goal at the YMCA is to hold a CEO position or a (chief operating officer).

"I am interested in growth," he said. "I could care less about the money; it's about the growth. To often people are focused on getting a title for the money and I could care less."

Grassroots groups gear up for Saturday vote in New Orleans

By Hazel Trice Edney

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON — After weeks of candidate debates, a march for voting rights, several voting rights lawsuits and a week of pre-election voting, grassroots groups are stepping up their outreach to displaced New Orleans voters leading up to this Saturday's election.

"I think the turnout is going to be a surprise. You take a look at what has happened in early vote as well as absentee ballots that have been sent in, they seem to be above what election officials had anticipated," says displaced New Orleans community activist, Vincent Sylvain, New Orleans' coordinator of the Rebuild Hope Now Campaign of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation.

At the beginning of this week, more than 10,500 voters had cast early ballots in 10 Louisiana communities. In addition, 15,000 voters had requested absentee ballots; about 3,000 have been returned.

Sylvain explains, "There seems to be genuine interest and a great interest from those who are invested in the community — property owners, those who were employed working in New

Orleans, as well as residents of public housing who feel that some injustice has taken place in the fact that the Housing Authority of New Orleans has not opened. This is going to be the first time that the citizens of New Orleans are going to have an opportunity to express their outrage and maybe, in some cases, their support of the elected officials who are in place. We'll know the outcome of that on the 22nd."

Although people, displaced by Katrina, are spread across the nation, concentrated mostly in other parts of Louisiana, Atlanta, Ga. and Texas, Sylvain says he doesn't believe distance or stratification will stop determined voters.

"It makes it challenging and it makes it difficult and it makes it different, but what you'll probably have working this time is more self-motivation perhaps. Or a greater reason for the voters to feel that they need to be a part of the political process," says Sylvain. "We are as hopeful as many of the candidates that that in itself will be enough to encourage voters who would otherwise would not vote in a normal election."

There had been widespread concern that

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May 4, 2006

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