

News at a Glance

Lionel Richie added to Essence Festival lineup

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - Lionel Richie and Maze, featuring Frankie Beverly, have been added to the 2009 Essence Music Festival lineup.

They will join an already star-studded roster that includes Beyonce, Al Green, Ne-Yo, John Legend, Maxwell and Anita Baker.

Festival organizers said last week that not only will Beverly and Maze close this year's festival as they have done since the event's inception in 1995, they are also on tap to be honored in a special tribute that will feature R&B and soul artists who have not yet been named.

Essence, billed as one of the nation's largest annual events celebrating black music and culture, is slated for July 3-5. The day-by-day lineup has not been released, but as in the past, musical acts will perform at the Louisiana Superdome and motivational seminars will be held during the day at the Morial Convention Center.

The bill also includes Charlie Wilson, Ryan Leslie, Melanie Fiona, Robin Thicke, Salt-N-Pepa, En Vogue, Teena Marie, Eric Benet and a host of Louisiana acts, among them trumpeter Irvin Mayfield, soul singer Marva Wright, Trombone Shorty, Little Freddie King and the Rebirth Brass Band.

This year's festival will include events marking the festival's 15th anniversary and President Barack Obama's election. Obama spoke at Essence two years ago, when he was campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination. There also will be a tribute to Bishop T.D. Jakes, the Dallas pastor who gave Obama's Inauguration Day sermon in Washington, D.C.



Richie

Lack of Vitamin D linked to health problems in teenagers

DALLAS (AP) - New research in teenagers links low levels of vitamin D to high blood pressure and high blood sugar, which can lead to ominous early health problems.

The "sunshine" vitamin is needed to keep bones strong, but recent research has linked vitamin D to other possible health benefits. The teen study confirms results seen in adults, linking low levels with risk factors for heart disease, the researchers said.

Teens in the study with the lowest vitamin D levels were more than twice as likely to have high blood pressure and high blood sugar. They were also four times more likely to have metabolic syndrome, defined as have three of more conditions that contribute to heart disease and diabetes - including high blood pressure, high blood sugar, big waists and high cholesterol.

The body makes vitamin D when exposed to sunlight's ultraviolet rays. Getting about 15 minutes of sunlight a few times a week is generally enough. Vitamin D is also in fortified foods like milk and in salmon and other oily fish.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recently doubled its recommended amount of vitamin D for children and teens to 400 units daily - the equivalent of drinking four cups of milk. The pediatricians group said kids who don't get enough should take vitamin supplements.

The teen study looked at about 3,600 boys and girls ages 12 to 19 who took part in a government health survey from 2001 to 2004. The researchers used measurements of vitamin D from blood tests.

On average, none of the teens were getting enough vitamin D. Whites had the highest levels, blacks had the lowest levels and Mexican-Americans had levels in between.

Lawmakers propose state name change

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) - Some Rhode Island lawmakers and residents think it's about time the state changed its name.

The official name of the nation's smallest state is Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, and it's those last two words people have a problem with. Some say they conjure up images of slavery.

Rep. Joseph Almeida and Sen. Harold Metts are sponsoring a bill with support from the black community that would amend the state constitution to delete the words "Providence Plantations" from the name.

Metts calls the words "an insult." Dennis Langley, executive director of the Urban League of Rhode Island, supports the move.

Previous efforts to remove the words from the official state name have failed.

Florida Supreme Court gets another black justice

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) - Gov. Charlie Crist has appointed Circuit Judge James Perry of Sanford to the Florida Supreme Court.

The announcement gives the seven-member court a second black justice. It also enhances the Republican governor's stature among African-Americans whether he seeks re-election in 2010 or runs for the U.S. Senate.

But Crist disappointed some conservative groups that lobbied for another nominee, 5th District Court of Appeal Judge Alan Lawson.

The appointment is Crist's fourth in less than a year - a majority of the high court. He used his first two picks to appoint strong conservatives. His last two appointments, though, could keep the court on a more moderate course.



Perry

TV ONE opposes Johnson station

BY BOBBI BOOKER
PHILADELPHIA TRIBUNE

(NNPA) - Two of the biggest names of African-American media communications are locked in a war of words over the future of minority-owned television outlets.

Robert L. Johnson, the founder of Black Entertainment Television (BET), has applied to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to approve plans for a new "urban" television network.

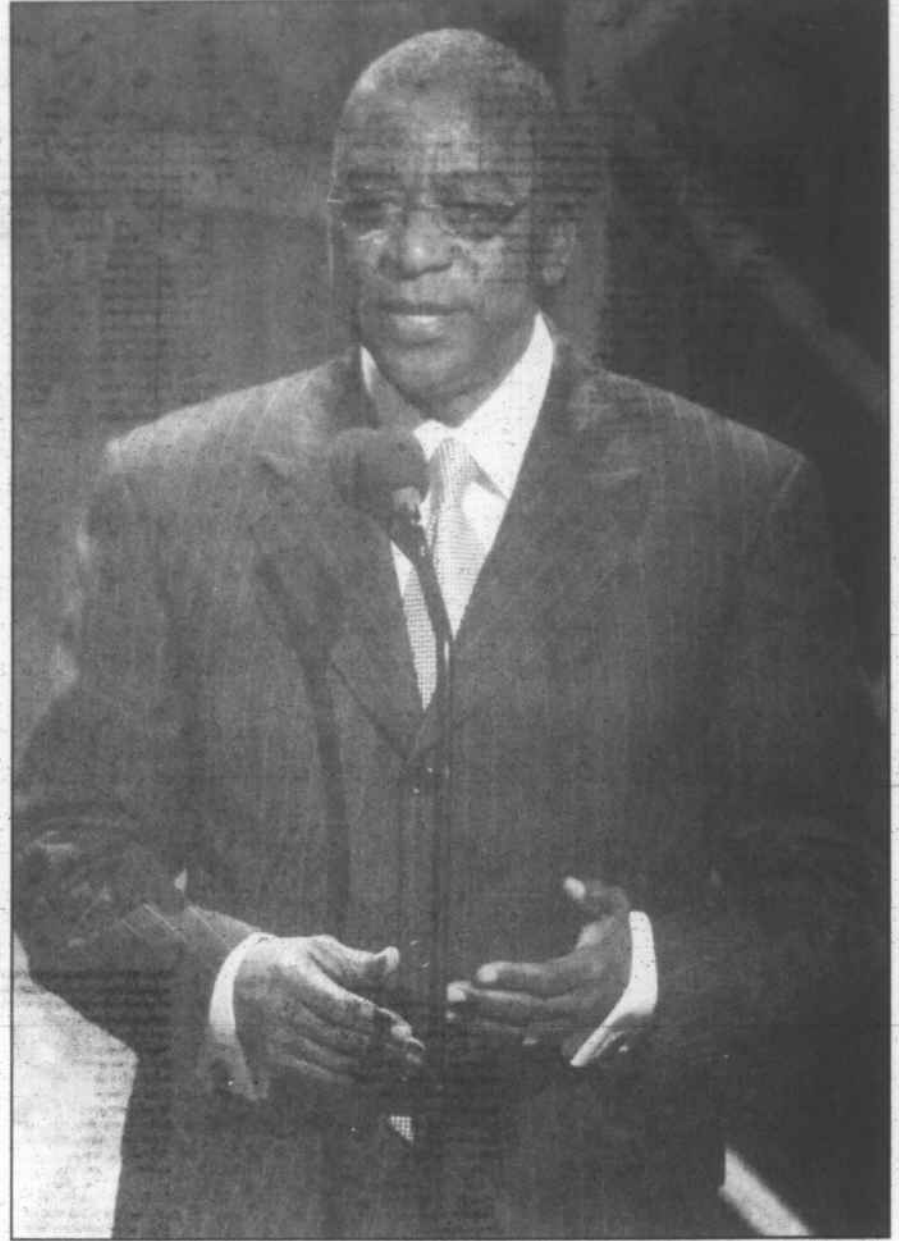
Johnson is joined in his application by Ion Media Networks Inc., which describes itself as "a network television broadcasting company which owns and operates the largest broadcast television station group in the U.S., as measured by the number of television households ION's stations serve." Johnson's company would own 51 percent of the new venture and Ion 49 percent.

The plans for the urban channel have been challenged by TV One Chairman Alfred C. Liggins, who heads the largest multimedia company that primarily targets African-American and urban listeners, viewers, readers and Internet users.

TV One told the FCC that Johnson's plan "simply would substitute a government-favored programmer (Urban) for another, such as TV One, that does not receive the government's favored dispensation."

The TV One FCC filing in opposition of Johnson's bid to launch an upstart, urban-targeted network has drawn the ire of Johnson, who expressed his "disappointment" in both an exclusive interview with the trade publication Broadcasting & Cable and a personal letter to Liggins.

"It does surprise me," Johnson told B&C this week. "That's how TV One came to be - asking for carriage and insisting that



Robert Johnson speaks at an awards show presented by the network he founded - BET.

See Johnson on A4

Web site started to fund O.J. Simpson legal appeal

BY KEN RITTER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS -

Claiming O.J. Simpson was dealt an injustice, an effort is underway to solicit money for the former football star's appeal of his Nevada conviction and prison sentence on kidnapping and armed robbery charges.

Barrett Prody, the brother of Simpson's former girlfriend, has created a non-profit corporation and an Internet Web site, the Society Against Legal Injustice Inc., to raise money for Simpson.

"I hope to help out someone who has gotten to be a good friend," Prody said by telephone from his home in Fargo, N.D. "I want to leverage his name in an effort to right an injustice out there in Las Vegas."

Simpson lawyers Yale Galanter in Miami and Gabriel Grasso in Las Vegas said they aren't connected to Prody's effort and don't think the fund is needed.

"It seems that Barrett has the best of intentions," Galanter said. "But whatever he's doing is on a separate track with what we're doing."

The lawyers said they expected to file an appeal in the next six weeks with the Nevada Supreme Court of Simpson's Oct. 3 conviction for the armed robbery and kidnapping of two sports memorabilia dealers in a Las Vegas casino hotel room.

Galanter, who said he never met or spoke with Prody, said Simpson's trial fees and costs were fully paid and his appellate fees and costs were "basically paid." He declined to provide dollar amounts, citing attorney-client confidentiality.

Prody's effort has the backing of Simpson's daughter, Arnelle Simpson, and a close Simpson friend, Tom Scotto.

Arnelle Simpson and Scotto, both of Miami, told The Associated Press that they expected any money Prody raises would help pay the 61-year-old former football star and television actor's legal bills.

"It's legit," Arnelle Simpson said of Prody's effort. "It was established and created for my dad. Of course I approve of it and will support it."

Scotto said he also agreed to be a board member of the Society Against Legal

Injustice. "I know Barrett. I know his sister. I've worked with him to get this thing done," Scotto said.

Prody's younger sister, Christine Prody, was Simpson's girlfriend for more than a decade after the NFL Hall of Famer was acquitted in the 1994 slaying



O.J. Simpson's mugshots from 1994 and 2008.

See Simpson on A4

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