

NAACP president introduces national march

by Ashley Johnson

Courier Staff Writer

Taking action, and standing up against racism and injustices in regard to voting rights, education and employment during this “critical time in our nation’s history” are just a few of the points National NAACP President and CEO Cornell William Brooks discussed during his national address which took place in Pittsburgh on June 24 at the Hill House Association. His message was to air days later on several national broadcast stations including the American Urban Radio Network and WGBN-AM.

“This is a critical moment in the life of the NAACP; a moment in which our character is being tested. It is a moment in which our integrity is being stressed. It is a moment in which the nation is looking to an organization represented by people who love this country, who believe in this country, who stand on the values of the constitution. It is a moment in which real leadership is necessary,” Brooks, an attorney and minister, said to a room of invited guests. “Your NAACP is suited up to fight. This is the fight of our lives. (We are) not an NAACP content on standing on our past. We are standing up for the present and the future. That’s who we are.”

During his approximately 30-minute address, Brooks discussed the recently announced launching of the national organization’s “America’s Journey for Justice” March, an 860-mile march, through five states, which will begin Aug. 1 and run through mid-September. It will start in Selma, Ala., and end in the nation’s capitol, Washington, D.C. He called this event a “multigenerational fight” that will last 40 days and 40 nights.

“We are marching because we believe our lives, our votes, our jobs and our schools matter. We’ve seen all across this country, young people engaged in protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, (and) die-ins because they can’t stand what they see on televi-

sion, they can’t stand what they see on social media. They’re saying, ‘Someone, somewhere has got to stand up and stand against this injustice.’ We at the NAACP understand.”

It’s critical to get involved, he said, because “at a moment where we’re seeing police brutality reign supreme across the country, the voting rights act under attack, profound injustices in our educational system and in terms of the economy. What we’re trying to do is bring young people together and older people together, and focus on what we can do?”

Brooks, who is asking local branches to send individuals to the national march, the end gathering in D.C., or organize and support simultaneous demonstrations and teach-ins at home on the four areas of “our lives, our votes, our jobs and our schools matter,” said this march is a combination of the teachings learned from the March on Washington in the 60s married with modern technology. “We’re online and in person.”

Connie Parker, president of the NAACP Pittsburgh Branch, said, “We have a lot of work before us. It’s not easy, people may not like it—too bad, we’re going to do what we have to do and we’re going to get it done. We’re going to change this city.” She later said, of Brooks’ words, “that was a fantastic message and it inspired me more than I was before. We’re all on the same journey, to change our community... We have to do the right thing.”

Along with the “America’s Journey for Justice” March, Brooks also touched on the recent shooting in South Carolina, needed gun reform legislation and the removal of the Confederate rebel flag, which was just days before a Black woman, Bree Newsome with the assistance of James Tyson, who is White, both from North Carolina, climbed up the 30-foot flagpole that holds the Confederate flag outside the South Carolina State House and removed it.

During his comments on removing the rebel flag, which Brooks said the NAACP has been fighting for years, he said, “We’re saying to the South Carolina legislators, we understand that as a matter of law, legislatively speaking, a two-thirds vote is necessary, but were are clear that (while) a two-thirds vote may be legislatively necessary, a unanimous vote is morally required.”

Esther Bush, president and CEO of the



Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, attended the meet-and-greet and said, "We are going to be supporting each other's efforts. Whatever the NAACP is doing and all of our sister organizations are doing, all of us have to help each other. It's not just about the flag. We want to bring the flag down from everywhere and stop its use, but this is an opportunity to talk about race in America. This is much bigger than a flag." She continued by saying, "I'm just so proud and pleased that the president of the NAACP was here because that motivates us even more."

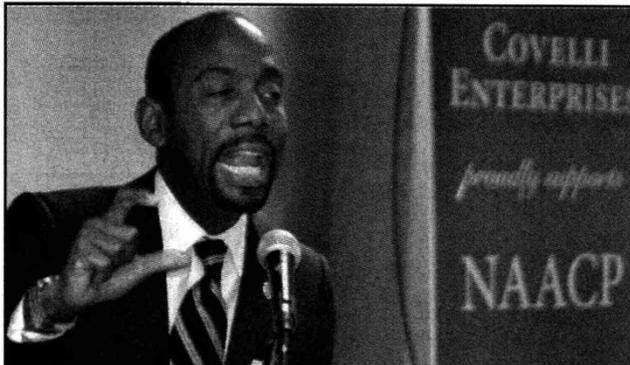
In addition to Brooks' address a special presentation was made by Sam Covelli, president of Covelli Enterprises' Panera Bread, the afternoon's food sponsor and a local corporate supporter. While promising to continue to embrace and support the NAACP, Covelli presented Brooks with a \$10,000 check for the NAACP National Youth & College Division.

"There's a lot of work to do. You (the organization) can't do it yourself. We need to all work together, as a country, to end racism and hate. We want to work for a better just society for everyone."

(For information on the "America's Justice for Journey" campaign, visit www.naacp.org, follow #justicesummer or text summerjustice to 62227.)

"We are marching because we believe our lives, our votes, our jobs and our schools matter."

Cornell William Brooks



CAMPAIGN LAUNCH—National NAACP President Cornell William Brooks speaks of the recently launched "America's Journey for Justice" March during a Meet and Greet on June 24 at the Hill House. (Photo by Rossano Stewart)



WELCOME TO PITTSBURGH—From left: former NAACP President Tim Stevens, Cheryl Hall-Russell, president, Hill House Association; Connie Parker, president, NAACP Pittsburgh Branch; Cornell William Brooks, National NAACP president; and Caryn and Sam Covelli of Covelli Enterprises, owners of Panera Bread. (Photo by Rossano P. Stewart)

Minority students invited to learn about STEM

National lab hosts event for sake of science

By Ivy Kuhrman
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Balloons and marshmallows might be expected at a party — not a lab — but a group of students used those items Friday for the sake of science at My Brother's Keeper Day hosted by the National Energy Technology Laboratory in South Park.

The My Brother's Keeper initiative, launched last year by President Barack Obama, was created to help close the opportunity gap for boys and young men of color. The National Energy Technology Laboratory is the third national lab to host such an event.

"From what I'm told, this is the largest," said Scott Klara, the lab's deputy director. About 130 minority students — both boys and girls — from the city participated, he said.

Getting young people interested in STEM — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — is important to the national energy lab. About 40 percent of its employees will become eligible for retirement within five years, Mr. Klara said.

Energy is a \$6 trillion industry, said Jody Tallbear, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Department of Energy. "It's a field that's going to continue to keep growing," she said.

It is especially important that young Americans pursue STEM, Ms. Tallbear said, because government lab workers must be U.S. cit-

izens. The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh chapter of the National CARES Mentoring Movement, both of which work toward African-Americans' success, invited young people they believed would benefit from learning about STEM careers.

Some attended at the request of a parent or relative, but others, like Dathen Wallace Jr., 17, of North Versailles, chose to come because of a deep interest.

"I love science," he said. "[NETL] was the perfect place to see what happens in the real world of engineering and chemistry."

Dathen wants to be a chemical engineer, but he also enjoys the computer-aided design he does at his Carnegie Science Center internship.

"I wouldn't mind doing CAD and even other STEM field jobs," he said. "I could see myself in any of those positions."

Students toured labs and spoke to employees about geology, surveying technologies for Marcellus Shale drilling, and predicting and preventing oil spills. They also used energy monitors to determine how much household appliances consume, engineered towers out of marshmallows and toothpicks, created and raced balloon rockets, and manipulated images using Photoshop software.

Brandon Pannell, 11, of Swissvale liked the balloon rocket activity best. "I liked when the balloon [flies] out. It's like energy," he said. "I love science."

Mya Lomax, 14, of Penn Hills enjoyed building with marshmallows. "It was fun just building a tower," she said. "I could see myself being in the sciences because I like math and science."

That's exactly the attitude the energy lab hoped to foster. "If we can energize and excite them, that's a major part," Mr. Klara said.

Ivy Kuhrman: ikuhrman@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1510.



Pam Panchak/Post-Gazette

Shane Johnson, a 10th-grader from West Mifflin, builds a marshmallow tower Friday during My Brother's Keeper Day at South Park.



Energy jobs revealed to students

Area youths tour lab; industry officials hope youngsters go after variety of roles in field

BY KATELYN FERRAL

Once they pierced the mini marshmallows with toothpicks, students stacked them high until they teetered but did not fall.

Minority youth advocates hope the toothpick towers instill engineering principles that years from now could become the steel beams of a skyscraper.

"Today is about opening up a whole new world to you," Scott Klara told more than 100 middle and high school students gathered Friday at the U.S. Department of Energy's National Energy Technology Laboratory in South Park.

"We want you to come away excited about all the opportunities in your future," said Klara, the lab's deputy director.

"My Brother's Keeper Day at the Lab" event introduced students to the energy industry and the people who research and run it. It was organized and hosted by the Technology Laboratory and My Brother's

Keeper, a nonprofit organization that helps students overcome barriers to success. The Pittsburgh CARES Mentoring Movement and the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, a nonprofit that provides educational programs for underserved minority students, also sponsored the event.

Often, students think only mathematicians and scientists can work in energy, but the field's opportunities go far beyond those jobs, said Lilas Soukup, who manages Science Technology Engineering and Math programs at the laboratory. That's especially true in Western Pennsylvania, where the coal, gas, oil and nuclear industries got their start.

Consider rocks. Lots of students play outside and like rocks, but they often don't connect that interest to a job as a geologist, or see how it relates to oil and gas drilling, Soukup said.

The process of extracting natural gas from the Marcellus shale also was featured. Students toured research labs and saw how drones discover sites for well pads, how drillers find shale deep underground and how to clean up an oil spill, she said.

"It's start to finish, so they

understand what's involved," she said.

In addition to building toothpick towers, students created balloon rockets.

"That was crazy!" said Davin Mins, as he watched a balloon shoot through the air. The project illustrated Newton's 3rd Law of Motion: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Mins, 10, who will be a fifth-grader at Propel Homestead in the fall, said he likes science and is thinking about a job where he can make things. Energy is important, he said, because it's "what keeps things on."

Brandon Pannell, 11, nodded in agreement.

The rising fifth-grader at Woodland Hills Academy in Swissvale said he'd like to have a job where he builds things, too.

"It's very fun," he said.

This is the first year the event has been held. The National Energy Technology Laboratory employs nearly 1,400 people and has a 2015 budget of \$864 million that funds research on fossil fuels, renewable energy and more.

Katelyn Ferral is a staff writer for Trib Total Media.



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Under the watchful gaze of Saundra Cole McKamey, executive director and teacher at POORLAW (People of Origin Rightfully Loved and Wanted), students (from left) Christian Yates, 11, Jaison Houser, 10, and Alise Godfrey, 10, learn about structural engineering using marshmallows and toothpicks as they build a tower Friday.