



# Constitutional Writes

The official newsletter of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site

Fall/Winter 2004-2005  
Volume 2, Issue 2

## Central High School National Historic Site Dedicates Restored Reflecting Pool



Central High School students release origami cranes into the new reflecting pool.

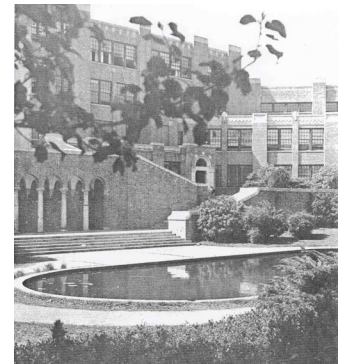


New reflecting pool under construction.

On September 26, 2004, Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, together with the Little Rock School District and AARP Arkansas, commemorated the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Central High crisis and dedicated the newly restored reflecting pool in front of the school. Nearly 600 people gathered to remember the courage of the Little Rock Nine—the nine African-American teenagers who desegregated the school in 1957—and commemorate one of the most important events of the Civil Rights Movement. United States Senator Mark Pryor, who attended Central High before moving to Washington, D.C. with his family when his father was elected to the Senate, gave the keynote address. Other speakers included Superintendent Mike Madell, Central High Principal Nancy Rousseau, and Little Rock School District Superintendent Dr. Roy Brooks.

The event was held in conjunction with AARP's national *Voices of Civil Rights* tour. Maria Reynolds-Diaz, Arkansas State Director of AARP and national AARP board member Jennie Chin Hansen provided remarks. The purpose of the project is to gather and preserve stories from individuals about their civil rights experiences. A crew from the History Channel is traveling with the bus to help record the stories for a future documentary. All stories will eventually be preserved in the Library of Congress. At the ceremony, project leader Dorisene Hill invited visitors to participate in the project. Actor Darryl Van Leer was also on hand and portrayed Thurgood Marshall and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in two dramatic presentations. AARP is continuing to collect stories and anyone who is interested can record them on their website at [www.voicesofcivilrights.com](http://www.voicesofcivilrights.com).

Continued on pg. 4



Black and White Photos Above: The original Central High Reflecting Pool, *The Pix* yearbook.

# FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

It has been an exciting summer at Central High School National Historic Site! The National Park Service (NPS) and our community partners have taken several steps towards the future of the historic site:

Just before Memorial Day the NPS completed acquisition of the vacant lot on the northeast corner of Daisy L. Gatson Bates Drive and Park Street. NPS staff and contractors have spent the summer clearing brush and other debris from the property, which formerly was the location of the Capitol Wholesale Florists greenhouse. The 1.3 acre lot will be the future home of a larger, permanent visitor center for the historic site. Construction of the new facility will begin when Congress appropriates funds for the project.

In June the NPS, City of Little Rock, the Little Rock School District, and Central High Neighborhood, Inc. signed a memorandum of understanding to encourage long-term protection of Central High School and the surrounding neighborhoods. Under the agreement the partners will work together to ensure that the area's historically significant resources and characteristics are maintained and restored for the enjoyment and education of future generations. The partners also will cooperate on other issues to promote the attractiveness of the Central High area as a place to live, work, and play.

On August 6 the City of Little Rock and the National Park Service finalized a cooperative agreement to help accomplish mutual goals in the Central High School area. The agreement will allow the city and the NPS to share resources to promote historic preservation, to study issues such as parking and pedestrian safety, and to plan ways to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the desegregation of Central High School (to be observed in 2007).

Finally, as the summer comes to an end, NPS staff is preparing a proposal to expand the boundary of the historic site. The proposed expansion would add the seven houses along Park Street (facing the

school) to the boundary. The houses are very important features of the historic landscape. The homes served as the backdrop for many of the events that occurred along Park Street in 1957. Expansion of the boundary, which is recommended in the site's *General Management Plan*, is necessary for the NPS to better help protect the homes.

The NPS does not intend to purchase the houses. We believe that responsible, private homeowners can best provide the long-term care necessary to protect the properties. However, by including the houses within the boundary, the NPS would have more flexibility to assist the homeowners in preserving and restoring the historic character of the buildings. Only Congress can authorize the boundary change; we are hopeful that Congress will consider the proposal sometime next year.

If you would like to learn more about any of the items discussed in the column, please telephone me at 501-374-3067 or e-mail me at michael\_madell@nps.gov.

R. Michael Madell, Superintendent

## Calling All Vounteers!



Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site is looking for volunteers to work at the Visitor Center. Currently, we have openings for volunteers in our bookstore, interpretation (historical research, photography, video), and gardening (Commemorative Garden, Visitor Center). Our volunteers will be part of the team that will assist visitors from AROUND THE WORLD expected to visit the site and in November 2004 with the opening of the Clinton Presidential Library!

If you love visiting America's National Parks, here is an opportunity to be part of one! Contact Lea Baker, Volunteer Coordinator, at (501) 374-3067 for more information. We hope to hear from you soon!

## American Idols



From left: Ranger Trickey, bass player Tom, Jennifer Hudson, Camile Velasco, Minnijean Brown, George Huff, and "Idol" manager, Lee .

Three of the top ten "American Idols" took time out to visit the site the day before they performed at North Little Rock's Altell Arena in August. Park Ranger Spirit Trickey took them inside Central High School where Central's principal, Nancy Rousseau, spoke to them inside the lobby about the school. The three, along with a bass player and manager, enjoyed meeting their "idol," Minnijean Brown, one of the Little Rock Nine, back at the visitor center.

## National Night Out

On August 3rd the staff at Central High School National Historic Site participated in the neighborhood National Night Out. The evening consisted of fun filled and educational activities, including face painting and jewelry making.

Park Rangers Taronia Bennett and Spirit Trickey gave out information on Central High School National Historic Site. Children were able to conduct Junior Ranger activities and receive badges and certificates. Materials from other city and state agencies were also available.

Park Ranger Taronia Bennett talks to neighborhood children at National Night Out.



# In Pursuit of Equality

“.....We are going to save this country’s soul, white or black, whether they like it or not. We are going to do it with courage and determination, and without compromise.”

Thurgood Marshall

On May 15, 2004 Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site partnered with Philander Smith College to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* Supreme Court decision with a panel discussion on the ruling’s lasting implications. The panelists included Dr. Angelo Ancheta, Director of Legal and Policy Advocacy Programs for the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University; Christopher Mercer, an attorney in Little Rock and former field secretary for the NAACP who assisted Daisy and L.C. Bates during the 1957 Crisis; Judge Wiley Branton, Jr., whose father worked closely with Thurgood Marshall on the Little Rock school case; Junious C. Babbs, Jr., Associate Superintendent for Administrative Services for the Little Rock School District; and Rhonda Allen, currently a freshman at UALR in the Donaghey honor’s program. Dr. Leroy Williams from the Department of History at UALR moderated the discussion. Approximately

75 people attended the event, including high school classes from Central High. The panelists discussed what *Brown* meant to them, and shared their thoughts about its implications for education today.

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration raised questions and concerns about where we need to go from here. Some of the suggestions from the panelists were to be informed, be proactive with you or your child’s education and exercise your rights, which were fought so hard for, to vote. Ms. Allen urged young people to “get out of your comfort zone,” at school and build relationships with people who are different from you.

To learn more about building diversity councils in high schools, contact the Little Rock Racial and Cultural Diversity Commission at (501) 224-5483.

Spirit Trickey, Park Ranger



Judge Wiley Branton, Jr. speaks while other panelists look on. From L to R: Dr. Leroy Williams, Rhonda Allen, Junious Babbs, Jr., and Dr. Angelo Ancheta.

# Arkansas Gallery Exhibits at the Little Rock National Airport



If you happen to be at the Little Rock National Airport, be sure to check out our exhibit on the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case in the Arkansas Gallery. May 17, 2004 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the Supreme Court decision, which ruled that “separate but equal” education was unconstitutional in the United States. The court’s decision to end segregation in schools guaranteed educational equality under the law for African-American students across the country, including students in Little Rock, Arkansas. With the 1954 *Brown* decision on their side, the Little Rock Nine desegregated Central High School in 1957.

A new exhibit that we are currently developing for the Arkansas Gallery features the National Black Political Convention held in Little Rock in 1974. Delegates from across the United States gathered in the capitol city March 15-17 to hear speeches and vote on the party’s platform. Daisy Bates, president of the Arkansas chapter of the NAACP during the 1957 crisis at Central, and the Reverend Jesse Jackson, as well as many others, participated in the convention. The Convention arose out of the need for African Americans to define their political voice following the Civil Rights era; it also proved to be a test for the people of Little Rock, who since 1957 had been nationally known for its fight against the desegregation of schools.

Michelle Simpson, Graduate Assistant

Continued from front page

After the program, participants gathered around the reflecting pool for the dedication. The pool was an original feature of the school's campus, built in 1927, but was removed in the 1980s because of maintenance problems. The National Park Service provided \$50,000.00 to restore the pool, while Central High School and parents and alumni provided additional funds. At the dedication, participants released 48 origami cranes into the water. The cranes are an international symbol of peace and 47 of them represented the years since Central High's desegregation, while the 48<sup>th</sup> crane represented the future and the hope for world peace.

Laura A. Miller, Chief of Interpretation



Reflecting pool under reconstruction, August 23, 2004.



Darryl Van Leer portrays Thurgood Marshall.



Gibbs Elementary Students and Central High School Principal Nancy Rousseau (on left) release origami cranes into the new reflecting pool.

## Come Celebrate the Clinton Presidential Library Opening With Us!

In conjunction with the Clinton Presidential Library's opening, November 15-19, 2004, Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site will host several events. For more information, see [www.arkansasglobecoming.com](http://www.arkansasglobecoming.com) and [www.nps.gov/chsc/](http://www.nps.gov/chsc/). Mark the following dates on your calendars:

**November 15, 2004** - Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, in partnership with Central Arkansas Library System, is pleased to welcome Janis F. Kearney as our guest lecturer. Ms. Kearney is the former publisher of the *Arkansas State Press* newspaper and served as the personal diarist to former President William Jefferson Clinton. She is currently writing two books; *Cotton Field of Dreams* and *Conversations: William Jefferson Clinton ... from Hope to Harlem*. In her talk, "Our History Awaits Us: Creating Our Legacies," Ms. Kearney will speak about our individual responsibilities to contribute to our legacies, and discuss ways each of us can make positive effects in our world. The talk will be held Monday, November 15, 2004 at 6:30 p.m. in Central Arkansas Library System's Darraugh Center for Intellectual Freedom at the downtown library.

**November 17, 2004** - Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site Park Rangers will conduct a guided "hard hat" tour of Central High School on Wednesday, November 17, 2004 at 6:00 p.m., allowing visitors an opportunity to see the school itself, as well as the work being done to renovate the interior—work paid for, in part, by a \$2.5 million Save America's Treasure's grant.

**All Week! November 15-19, 2004** - The Visitor Center will be open in the evenings during the library's opening week. We will be open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. If you have not been able to visit before because you did not get off of work in time, now is your chance! In addition, a video of the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony, in which Congress and President Clinton awarded our nation's highest civilian honor to the Little Rock Nine, will be shown in the visitor center on November 15-18<sup>th</sup>, 2004 at 10:00 a.m., and at 1:00 and 6:00 p.m. All events are free. For more information, please call 501-374-1957.



## Education Corner

More than 150 Arkansas teachers took part in nine workshops across the state on the 1957 desegregation crisis at Little Rock Central High School. The goal of the workshops was to introduce teachers to the historic site as a resource for the classroom and to tell the story of 1957 and the Civil Rights Movement in general. Teachers received information on Little Rock Central High School, Civil Rights Movement resources (web sites, reading lists), and tips on teaching children how to deal with controversial subjects. Teacher in-service opportunities for the fall include a day-long workshop at Dawson Education Service Cooperative in Arkadelphia on October 4, 2004 and a session on the 1957 desegregation crisis at the Arkansas Conference on Teaching (November 4-5, 2004).

In addition to the summer workshops, the historic site has received several grants this summer to conduct programs. The National Park Service awarded our site a \$1,400 volunteer grant to conduct activities with primary and secondary students during the Clinton Library opening in Little Rock on November 18, 2004. This grant will be used to conduct a program at the historic site. The Arkansas Humanities Council awarded a grant of \$800 to the historic site to establish a loan box program, "Word from the Bird" (a 1950s slang term for "the truth") to introduce students to life in 1950s America. All education service cooperatives that participated in this past summer's workshops will receive a loan box to house at their teacher center!

In addition to receiving grants to conduct programs for students, the historic site is working with 9<sup>th</sup> grade civics classes and EAST Lab students and staff from Little Rock Central High School to create a working civics unit that encompasses the essential question of how we have handled civil rights in American history. This year-long unit is easily intertwined with civics curriculum and includes interdisciplinary teaching methods, computer skills, and a culminating research project. After testing the program at the high school this coming year, it will be available for teachers throughout the country in the 2005-2006 school year.

Finally, a curriculum using the book, *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles, is available to primary school instructors. Targeting first- through fourth-grade students, the lesson focuses on developing empathy in students through reading, writing, and general comprehension of how a six-year old showed great courage in integrating the elementary schools of New Orleans, Louisiana. It is a story that all young children can relate to and has been tested previously at Gibbs Magnet for International Studies in Little Rock, Arkansas. The lesson was written by first-grade teachers Carolyn Blome, Abby Tankersley, and Katrina Adams at Gibbs Magnet. E-mail [lea\\_baker@nps.gov](mailto:lea_baker@nps.gov) or write the historic site for your copy!

Lea Flowers Baker, Education Specialist

For a FREE teacher's package from the historic site for the 2004- 2005 school year, contact:

Lea Flowers Baker  
700 West Capitol Avenue, Suite 3527  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

(501) 374- 3067 (phone)  
(501) 301-7762 (fax)  
[Lea\\_Baker@nps.gov](mailto:Lea_Baker@nps.gov)

---

### Thank You!

On September 17 the Board of Directors of Central High Museum, Inc. (CHMI) hosted a fundraiser to benefit Central High School National Historic Site. The money raised will help the National Park Service create educational and interpretive programs and protect the historic resources of Central High School and the surrounding neighborhood.

The fundraiser was held at the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, and the guest of honor was University of Arkansas head football coach Houston Nutt. Mr. Nutt is a graduate of Central High School and a former star quarterback for the Tigers. Thank you to the CHMI Board, to everyone who attended the event, and to all who made a contribution. You are appreciated! Special thanks to the following corporate sponsors:

- ★ Baldwin-Shell Construction
- ★ Balfour Printing
- ★ Bird and Bear Medical
- ★ CDI
- ★ City of Little Rock
- ★ Coca-Cola Bottling Company of AR
- ★ Coleman Dairy
- ★ Coulson Oil
- ★ Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods
- ★ Central High School
- ★ Diamond Bear Brewing Company
- ★ East Harding
- ★ Entergy
- ★ Hickingbotham Investments
- ★ Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau
- ★ Metropolitan National Bank
- ★ Millefleur French Floral Market
- ★ Moses Tucker Real Estate
- ★ Turning Leaf Vineyards

## EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the  
Interior

This newsletter is brought to you by the staff of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site.

### Editor

Tarona A. Bennett, Park Ranger

### Comments? Write to:

Superintendent  
Little Rock Central High School  
National Historic Site  
2125 Daisy L. Gatson Bates Drive  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72202

Phone: (501) 374-1957  
Fax: (501) 376-4728  
Website: [www.nps.gov/chsc](http://www.nps.gov/chsc)  
Email: [chsc\\_visitor\\_center@nps.gov](mailto:chsc_visitor_center@nps.gov)

## Scheduled Programs

### October 30, 2004

Join park rangers for the annual Big Boo!seum Bash Saturday night from 5:30-8:00 pm. City buses will be available to take trick-or-treaters to participating area museums.

### November 2004

Clinton Library Week Activities:

Nov. 15, Janis Kearney lecture at CALS

Nov. 17, Hart Hat tours of Central High

(See inside article for details.)

### January 17, 2005

Join park rangers for a special program on Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Arkansas.

### February 21, 2005

Daisy Bates Holiday. Park Rangers will conduct a special program on Daisy and L.C. Bates and the role of the NAACP in the desegregation of Little Rock's schools.

### April 2005

Celebrate National Park Week with us and learn more about Little Rock's own National Historic Site.

Park Rangers are available to give tours of the visitor center exhibit, commemorative garden and the exterior of Central High School. Off-site visits for classes or groups can be arranged as well. The Visitor Center features the exhibit, "All the World is Watching Us: Little Rock and the 1957 Crisis," as well as a bookstore with a wide selection of educational materials.

Contact a park ranger for more information on program topics and scheduled events. Reservations are required for tours and can be made by calling the park at (501) 374-1957.