

August 05, 2013

News Release

For Immediate Release

50th anniversary celebration of "I Have a Dream"



A group of community leaders and organizations invite members of the public to come together Wednesday, Aug. 28, 2013, for a celebration honoring the 50th anniversary of The March on Washington and Rev. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

Activities begin with a Unity March to Park Central Square; beginning at 7:30 p.m. on the North side of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Bridge, located in the 400 block of East Tampa St. Parking is available at Jordan Valley Community Health Center and Municipal Court Building. The March will travel south on Benton to St. Louis St.; west on St. Louis to Park Central Square.

At the Square, Springfield Mayor Bob Stephens and local faith leaders will give their respects and perspective of Rev. (Dr.) Martin Luther King Jr's social justice work and share how it affects Springfieldians today.

The evening's program will include the viewing of the iconic speech on a large screen canvas in the Square, and a symbolic "burial of hate" where participants will leave a time capsule under a monument on the Southeast corner of the Square. The monument memorializes three African-American men - Horace Duncan, Fred Coker and Will Allen - who were murdered during a public lynching on Square in 1906.

"The ramifications, the repercussions of it still exist today," said Mayor Bob Stephens. "There is a tremendous opportunity in Springfield but, in part, we've got to deal with what happened and understand it and make sure nothing like this ever happens again," says Mayor Bob Stephens.

Despite the painful reminder of events past, organizers see the overall event as one to promote understanding and to celebrate the messages of Dr. King. They also hope to encourage more diversity in work and educational environments.

The event is presented by the Greater Springfield Race & Faith Collaborative, along with support from:

City of Springfield; CoxHealth; Council of Churches of the Ozarks; Drury University; Evangel; ideaXfactory; Mercy; NAACP Springfield; Oke-Thomas + Associates, Inc.; OTC; Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce; Springfield-Greene County Libraries and Springfield Public Schools.

Volunteers are needed for all aspects of the event and production, which will be live streamed at springfieldmo.gov and on other partner websites. To volunteer, contact Cora Scott, City of Springfield Director of Public Information & Civic Engagement at 417-864-1009 or cscott@springfieldmo.gov.

For more information about the event, contact John Oke-Thomas at 417-863-6262 or john@oke-thomas.com, or Cora Scott at 417-864-1009 or cscott@springfieldmo.gov.

Reverend Mark Struckhoff, Executive Director, Council of Churches of the Ozarks (417- 862-3586, ext. 223 or mstruckhoff@ccoarks.org) and Dr. Ken Coopwood, Missouri State University Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion (417-836-3736 or kcoopwood@missouristate.edu), are both available for interviews in the weeks leading up to the event.