

# MLK celebration is a treat for the ears

By **Steve Smith** Reminder News

The Glastonbury Martin Luther King Community Initiative promised a musical journey for this year's annual celebration, and the event more than delivered as promised.

From the adorable Naubuc School Early Bird Choir's rendition of "This Little Light of Mine", complete with the children marching down the aisle holding small lights, to the hip-hop performance by Jeffrey Utubor, each musical piece was thought-provoking, poignant, and emotionally moving, and fit well into the overall story arc of King's early civil rights efforts to the modern problems that can and should be handled with King's teachings.

Frank Mitchell narrated the evening, giving context to each musical performance and why it was chosen.

Mitchell introduced the first musical selection of the evening, "Alabama," performed by the GHS Jazz Band, by explaining that King gave a speech in Washington in 1963 at the March for Jobs and Justice, in which King spoke of a dream. "I have a dream that one day in Alabama...little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls, as sisters and brothers."

"The next month, a Sunday morning bombing at Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church, killed 4 African-American girls," Mitchell said. "Inspired by Dr. King's eulogy at the children's funeral, saxophonist John Coltrane recorded 'Alabama' a few months later."

GMLKCI President Darwin Kovacs said that jazz has an underappreciated role in the civil rights movement.

"As early as the 1920s, black and white musicians played together," he said. "Beginning in the 1940s, jazz musicians and their audiences mixed publicly in clubs, often in violation of local laws. As the number of listeners grew, and the number of attendees at the clubs grew, white Americans started to understand the effect of segregation in all aspects of American culture."

Mitchell explained that change for civil rights was also reflected in music from white artists, including Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary, and Pete Seeger, among others.

"These musicians sang of the indignity of segregation and the shame of racism that mocked America's best democratic ideals," Mitchell said. "They also celebrated life's joyful possibilities, with hopeful songs of inspiration." Rev. Eric Anderson then performed two Seeger songs – "If I Had a Hammer" and "God's Counting on Me, God's Counting on You."

The Glastonbury High School Madrigals performed "My God is a Rock" and "Down by the River to Pray." Both songs were powerfully done, and clearly evoked emotions in the audience.

The Windsor Teens of Praise followed that with their performances of "There's a Brightside Somewhere/There is No Way" and "Walk in the Light."

The two teen groups performed together for the evening's finale, in what was an impressive display of young talent that received rousing ovations from the audience.

"The performances were moving and inspirational," Kovacs said at the conclusion of the evening, also reiterating the GMLKCI's mission. "Simply, we think that getting people together to discuss issues that are important will result in a better community for all of us," Kovacs said.

For more information, visit <http://www.glastonburymkci.org>



The Glastonbury High School Madrigals and the Windsor Teens of Praise performed two soulful songs together at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration on Jan. 19. Photo by Steve Smith.



THE NAUBUC SCHOOL EARLY BIRD CHOIR PERFORMED "THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE." PHOTO BY STEVE SMITH.



SHA-ANN FERGUSON, ONE OF THE INTERPRETIVE DANCERS FROM THE GROUP, PROMOTING POSITIVE CHANGE, DANCES TO "HAPPY BIRTHDAY DR. KING" BY STEVIE WONDER. PHOTO BY STEVE SMITH



JEFFERY UTUBOR PERFORMED A RAP CALLED "WE THE PEOPLE." PHOTO BY STEVE SMITH.



GLASTONBURY MARTIN LUTHER KING COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PRESIDENT DARWIN KOVACS PRESENTS LEADERSHIP GREATER HARTFORD SUMMER NEXUS SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS TO CLAIRE CANDELORI AND ALEXA MORIN. PHOTO BY STEVE SMITH.





ERIC ANDERSON PERFORMS SOME POPULAR FOLK SONGS, ALONG WITH HELP FROM THE AUDIENCE. PHOTO BY STEVE SMITH.



GMLKCI PRESIDENT DARWIN KOVACS (RIGHT) PRESENTS GHS JUNIOR HUNTER BROOKS WITH A CERTIFICATE HONORING HIS DESIGN FOR THE EVENT'S FLYER. PHOTO BY STEVE SMITH.



FRANK MITCHELL - ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND CURATOR OF THE AMISTAD CENTER FOR ART AND CULTURE AT THE WADSWORTH ATHENEUM - GAVE THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF EACH MUSICAL PERFORMANCE. PHOTO BY STEVE SMITH.



THE GHS MADRIGALS PERFORMED SOME HAUNTINGLY BEAUTIFUL VERSIONS OF "MY GOD IS A ROCK" AND "DOWN IN THE RIVER TO PRAY." PHOTO BY STEVE SMITH.



THE GHS JAZZ BAND OPENED THE SHOW WITH A SWINGING RENDITION OF "ALABAMA." PHOTO BY STEVE SMITH.