

Harvard economist visiting during Kwanzaa

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Manatee County's Neighborhood Leadership Initiative is taking Kwanzaa to another level. Rather than simply lighting candles and reciting words, the Initiative brought in nationally renowned leaders in the areas that are highlighted in Kwanzaa founder Dr. Maulana Karenga's original concept of the Kwanzaa celebration.

The distinguished guests are teaching the community how to live Kwanzaa's principals year-round instead of only one week. They arrived not only to help usher in the spirit of Kwanzaa, but to help bring change through education, dialogue and plans of action. Dr. Marvin Dunn, historian and chair of the psychology department of Florida International University, celebrated the Kwanzaa principal of "Kujichagulia" (self-determination) last night by introducing a critically acclaimed Manatee County Black Oral History Project funded by the Florida Humanities Council. Dunn will collect oral and documented history from black elders and pioneer families. Today, the Kwanzaa, principal of "Ujima" (working together cooperatively) will be highlighted from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with a day-long "Neighborhood in Dialogue" economic development program at the 13th Avenue Community Center.

The program will feature Dr. Ronald Ferguson, Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government economist, professor and researcher.

The Harvard economist has taught for 18 years and he is also a senior research associate at the Wiener Center for Social Policy.

In addition to his teaching and research assignments, he participates in a variety of consulting and policy advisory activities at the local, state and national levels.

Ferguson will lead the economic development dialogue with a distinguished panel of scholars that will include Dunn and Dr. Shelia Smalley, University of Central Florida professor; Irma Plummer, North Dade Assistant City Manager/McKnight Doctoral Fellow; Jacques LeBlanc, Miami's renowned youth entrepreneur trainer, and Doris Reddick, the first black woman elected to the Hillsborough County School District Board.

Also participating in the program will be economic development consultant Pamela Taylor; Margaret Tyler of Chicago's McKinsey and Company management consulting firm; Alana Tyler, engineer; and Miami's Clemmie Perry with her "Black Church and 21st Century Technology Challenges," dialogue.

"These are just a few names," said **Cynthia Y. Newell**, Neighborhood Leadership Initiative founder. "There will be local participants and others coming in from all over the country to help us dialogue and begin to challenge the economic system that we, as a community, are dealing with in Manatee County and beyond."

Tonight the youth will enjoy a teen dance from 8:30 p.m. to midnight at the 13th Avenue Community Center. Nationally known poet and free-style rapper Tim Wells will be there to facilitate the cultural and creative principals of Kwanzaa.

Tomorrow, the East Bradenton Boys and Girls Club will host a family workshop on using the Internet to find college scholarships for minority students. There will also be an extensive "Minority Youth Entrepreneurship Training" program featuring the visiting economists and professors.

"All young people and organizations interested in helping young people become entrepreneurs should be at this conference on Saturday," said **Newell**. "We have brought in experts who have been very successful in creating entrepreneurial programs that we are beginning to create locally."

The Neighborhood Leadership Initiative Kwanzaa programs and events are free and open to the public.

"We want the community to come out and participate. Instead of simply talking about moving forward with positive visions and dreams, we are taking our first steps toward turning them into a reality," said **Newell**.

The 13th Avenue Community Center is at 201 13th Ave. W., Bradenton, one block north of the Red Barn Flea Market.

For more details on the Neighborhood Leadership Initiative's future programs and its youth leadership partnerships, call 748-5564.

Caption: Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government economist, professor and researcher, Dr. Ronald Ferguson is in town today for a Kwanzaa community economic summit.