

Keeping the Dream Alive

Developing cultural awareness in today's youth; to be tomorrow's best citizen leaders.

On Wednesday, January 10, 2007 the New Hampshire Cultural Diversity Awareness Council (NHDAC) hosted the 6th annual "*Keeping the Dream Alive*" youth cultural diversity workshop, at the Waterville Valley Conference Center. This one-day program combines diversity training and skiing for up to 320 middle school students.

The goal of the program is to foster greater sensitivity and awareness of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday while promoting cultural diversity. The students came from several New Hampshire communities in addition to two Boston Public middle schools, the Donald MacKay School of East Boston and the Rafael Hernandez School of Roxbury.

The "*Keeping the Dream Alive*" diversity program is a very unique and innovative collaboration between corporate, civic, law enforcement, fire services, and the military. Students learn to address issues such as prejudice relating to one's economic status, language, religious, and ethnic origin. Through the use of interactive exercises, the students learn problem solving strategies and positive ways to resolve conflicts. They leave feeling that they have more in common with each other. We also hope that they also leave with a better understanding and respect for country, our country's flag, as well as the men and women who wear the uniform of our country's military, fire services, and law enforcement. The morning work session is followed by an afternoon of skiing and other outdoor activities. "We have discovered that our diversity program could serve as a model for the rest of the country" stated the President of the NHDAC, Wayne Jennings.

Continued Jennings "Thanks to the combined efforts and support from our corporate sponsors and community partners such as the Boston Fire Department, the 'Keeping The Dream Alive' youth cultural diversity workshop is a one-of-it's kind, world class workshop that has lasting positive impact on the students who attend."

Fire Commissioner Roderick J. Fraser, Jr. commented "We are very excited about participating in diversity programs for young people. We want to get the message out to these kids that a career in public safety is a rewarding career path for all men and women regardless of ethnicity.

Our firefighters enjoyed participating in the program and everyone, including myself, learned something from these kids.

This is an excellent program that I would like to see emulated here in Boston"

To show their appreciation to the Boston Firefighters who attended the workshop, some of the students together with Mr. Jennings, Fire Commissioner Fraser, Chief of Department Kevin P. MacCurtain and Boston Firefighters Local 718 President Ed Kelly participated in a ceremony at Fire Headquarters to honor these firefighters.

Firefighter Matt Paul of Engine 18 and Firefighter Dorian Jenkins of Ladder 6 were each presented with a beautiful plaque before a packed audience on February 2, 2007. It was also a chance for Firefighters Paul and Jenkins to renew friendships they developed with the students at the workshop.