

MLK weekend offers chance to dream big

By Lillia Callum-Penso • STAFF WRITER • November 3, 2008

Martin Luther King Jr. understood it. Langston Hughes too. Dreams are what sustain us.

That is the thinking behind this year's MLK Dream Weekend, the annual celebration of Dr. King and his legacy. This year, the event's fourth, marks a turning point, says Nika White, MLK Dream Weekend marketing and communications director. This year is not just about dreaming, it's about dreams realized too.

For the first time, the MLK Dream Weekend will offer people a chance to have their dreams fulfilled. The committee, along with the help of sponsors, is offering two \$500 prizes to go toward furthering someone's dream. The Greenville Hospital System is also awarding \$1,500 to help someone achieve a health-related dream.

White says the current presidential race has led many to feel like "nothing's too big" to dream, and organizers wanted to play off theme.

"And that is the message that Dr. King gave to all of us," White says. "Which is very relevant no matter your socioeconomic background or your race, no matter any of those demographics that tend to silo people into a particular category.

"Anybody can really relate to having a dream," she says, "to having goals, going after them and feeling very inspired to do so when you have support of other people in your life."

The message? Dreams are not just necessary, they're everything.

The MLK Dream Weekend committee has created a micro site (www.dreambighedid.com) on the Dream Weekend site where people can apply for the contest. Applications will be accepted until Dec. 12.

Applicants for the \$500 prizes must write a 250- to 500-word "dream statement." For the GHS prize, applicants must write a 500- to 1,000-word essay about their health-related dream. Winners will be chosen and announced at the MLK Diversity Banquet Jan. 16.

"It starts with having the belief that all things are possible," White says of the importance of dreams. If people work together, "there's a much greater probability of them being realized than not."

Though the contest ends Dec. 12, the dream Web site will remain active throughout the year, White says, "so we can keep MLK Dream Weekend on the top of minds all year long."