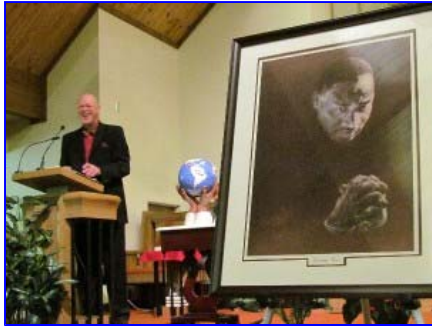




FEATURED NEWS

Tuesday, January 17, 2012

**Chilly day with warm hearts marks Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**



Mac McCadden behind "Freedom's Price" print

VIDEO OF ARTIST GEORGE SOLONEVICH INCLUDED

The chilly air and gray skies did not diminish the proud smiling faces of the young and the not so young as they celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. It was the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Annual Youth Day celebration Monday afternoon.

A crowd of over 200 gathered at the MLK memorial waiting for the signal to start the march to First Baptist Church. The Patrick Henry and William Fleming High School bands led the way. Youth held colorful handmade signs declaring their understanding of the celebration. "Keep the King dream alive" read one. Another sign proclaimed "I pray for love, world peace and justice."

Office holders and office hopefuls walked arm and arm. Mayor David Bowers was the first to lead the

marchers in song – "We shall overcome," he bellowed.

Dr. Perneller Chubb-Wilson, SCLC President Emeritus remembered when she stood beside Dr. King. Others remember being refused service at lunch counters. In Roanoke there were no demonstrations as in other cities. Roanoke saw that integration was inevitable. A biracial commission was formed that resulted in backdoor negotiations.

"Battles were fought in other places," said the Rev. E. T. Burton at an event last year. He had called on today's youth to understand how far they had come – "from the back of the bus to the steering wheel," he said.

Once everyone settled in the church Mac McCadden Master of Ceremonies introduced Ollie "Tiger" Howie who without falter read Dr. King's "I have a dream" speech. "

Dr. Nathaniel Bishop, President of Jefferson College and cousin of Dr. Wilson gave that same message to youth gathered in the church. "We need our young people from this community to consider a health care profession ... and encourage science."

The secret to his achievements was in his upbringing he said. He learned honesty, integrity and developed a strong work ethic at an early age. The whole community expected the same from every youth. Joking he wondered how his parents found out he did wrong even before he got home – "did they have text messaging back then?" he asked.



One of the youngest proudly holds his sign

Bishop announced that thanks to an etching of Dr. King by the late George Solonevich the first scholarship would be awarded to a city high school student this year.

The late artist George Solonevich's wife Inga gave Jefferson College a collection of prints of Martin Luther King Jr. titled "Freedom's Price." Proceeds from the sale of the prints go into a memorial scholarship fund. The endowment will award minority graduates of Roanoke City public high schools who are accepted for admission into a Jefferson College EHS-Paramedic or the Fire and EMS Technology degree programs.

Solonevich had fled Stalinist Russia after being jailed several times. From Russia he went to Germany spending half a year in a concentration camp before escaping to Finland. He spent much of his life looking for a place to call home before coming to America and settling in Roanoke.

George Solonevich watched Dr. King being arrested and placed in handcuffs. "He wrung his hands and was just so troubled by seeing that on television," said Bishop. It brought back memories of his time in the concentration camp and the oppression he himself had suffered.

Bishop said Solonevich thought of how they had made their way "to the land of the free" only to see a great man like Dr. King treated so disrespectfully.

It inspired him to create the 1963 print of Dr. King known as "Freedom's Price."

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