Volunteering a way of life for black Baltimoreans

Millions of volunteers were honored all across the nation this week during National Volunteer Week.

In Baltimore, volunteers were recognized by Mayor William Donald Schaefer and the Mayor's Council on Voluntarism for their many hours of unselfish contribution to the betterment of the city and its residents.

Among the thousands of black Baltimoreans, who give their time and devotion to those in need are a group of citizens who participate in the Meals on Wheels program.

Meals on Wheels is a United Way Agency. It has six locations in the city, one of them is located at Douglass Memorial Christian Community Church, Lafayette and Madison Avenues, which is pastored by the Rev. Marion Bascom.

The Meals on Wheels program at Douglass is "significant," he said. And the church depends upon its own church members and many from the community to insure its success.

The central office of Meals on Wheels provides the money, menus and food for its operation, Rev. Bascom said the church provides the kitchen, utilities and telephones making the program the largest black operated Meals program in the city.

This the the 12th year Meals on Wheels has been situated at Douglass, the church's secretary and treasurer for the program, Lula Guthrie told the AFRO. Meals are provided to about 44 people daily, five times per week.

"The majority of the clients are elderly, but some people as young as 22 have been served," she said. "The criteria is anyone who is homebound and cannot cook for themselves."

Bronwyn Thompson, director of communications for Meals on Wheels, told the AFRO that in fiscal year 1981, Douglass served 28,450 meals and the church has the facilities to serve about 100 people daily.

She said about 200 volunteers work at the church. Meals vary, but include traditional soul food dishes such as collard greens and ribs and more exotic dishes such as Hungarian Goulash and lasagna

Not all of the people who staff the Douglass program are volunteers, but they all have a background of helping others for no pay.

Roxanne Childs, 24, the kitchen manager, and Barbara Weirs, also 24, the cook are paid for their work. But both young women said they have served as volunteers in the past. Mrs. Childs said she worked as a candy stripper for various city hospitals and Ms. Weirs said preparing dinners for her church, Trinity Apostolic Faith Holiness Church, prepared her for her job as cook for Meals on Wheels.

The morning the AFRO visited Douglass' large and spotlessly clean kitchen, Mrs. Childs and Ms. Weirs were joined by two volunteers.

Abiki Tyson, 59, said she retired from the Social Security Administration as a computer operator about three years ago.

A member and also a volunteer at Bethel AME Church, Mrs. Tyson said she learned about the program through her sister, who also was a Meals on Wheels volunteer.

Anyone with questions about the program can call 561-1100 and speak to counselors. The program at Douglass can serve more people than it now reaches. More volunteers also are needed, especially during the summer to relieve the other volunteers who work year round.

HELPING TO FEED THE HOMEBOUND — Mrs. Adiki Tyson, a packer, left, Mrs. Roxanne Childs, kitchen manager, Ms. Barbara Weirs, cook and Mrs. Proctor, also a packer, are busy preparing delicious and salt-free meals for people enrolled in the Meals On Wheels program. (AFRO Photos by Roman Hankewycz)

Mrs. Tyson said she decided to volunteer some of her time to the program because she "decided it would be nice for my retirement."

"I love it," she said.

Wednesday is her volunteer day at Douglass. On a recent Wednesday morning she busily made and wrapped chicken salad sandwiches on whole wheat bread on the church's spotless stainless steel tables. Working next to her was Mabel Proctor.

At 78, Mrs. Proctor said she had been working with the program about five years.

"I've been a volunteer all of my life, going about hospitals, visiting the sick. I'm just a busybody," she laughed saying she will go anywhere she is needed.

Their days begin early. For Ms. Weirs and Mrs. Childs it can start as early as 6:30 a.m. when they come in to check the daily menus update records and start cooking food.

By 9 a.m., the volunteers arrive to package and load the food onto three vans, driven by three drivers and their helpers to people served by the program.

By noon, all food usually is delivered. Ms. Weirs said her day ends by 12:30 p.m. and Mrs. Childs said she works until 2 p.m.

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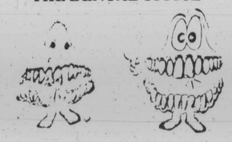

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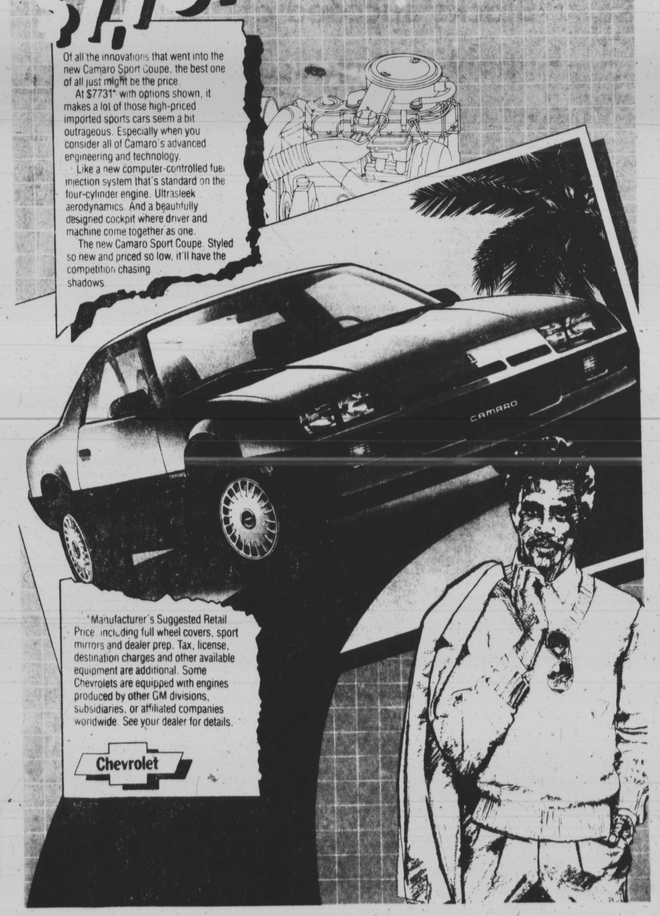

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LINING UP FOR CHEESE — A long line of city residents recently formed at a cheese give-away site at 1300 Division St. as the city of Baltimore began distributing its share of American processed cheese released by the federal government. (AFRO photo by Roman Hankewycz)

Anti-crime crusade

A local television station and the Baltimore City Police Department have joined forces to present "A.C.T." a year-long crime prevention education program.

A.C.T. - Anti-Crime Team - is designed to heighten public awareness to crime prevention methods and to encourage citizens and community groups to participate in already established police department crime resistance projects.

Throughout the year, WJC-TV, which has teamed with the police department, will produce special documentaries, crime prevention tips, and segments on all locally - produced programming, including Evening Magazine, People are Talking, Eyewitness News Conference and Square Off.

WJZ and the Baltimore City Police Department also will make monthly visits to various communities with crime prevention seminars. The first such seminar was at Northern Parkway Junior High on April 23.

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Black National Guardsmen to be honored

Soldiers in defense of the United States," the Citv, State and the French government will honor Maryland's black National Guard regiment, Company C-58th Support Battalion and the 243rd Engineer Company, Sunday, May 2, at Rash Field in Baltimore.

This 103-year-old regiment of native sons will be presented the Croix de Guerre by an emissary of the French embassy, originally awarded for heroic battle during World War I.

The Croix de Guerre will be presented to each of the two unit and all former members, particularly those having served during World War I, World War II and the Korean War, are urged to attend this special recognition ceremony to share the honor.

Originally organized in February 1879 as the Monumental City Guard of Baltimore; "Baltimore's Best"; black fighting men became part of the Maryland National Guard two years later.

Since then, they have defended America at home and abroad in the Spanish-American War, in France during World War I, in Hawaii during World War II and in the Korean War, when they received numerous Battle Streamers and the Korean Presidential Unit Citation.

Festivities include: City officials paying tribute to the contributions of these black citizen soldiers, a proclamation from Governor Harry Hughes, a parade and other award presentations.

A special tribute will go to the four surviving members of Company C, who fought during World War I in the Alsace-Lorraine region and the Argonne Forest of France.

William Brady, 86; Harry Dorsey, 86; Sumler Parron, 85; and Charles Wilson, 85, will receive "Outstanding Citizen" awards from the State of Maryland recognizing their service as National Guardsmen.

Soldier of the Year awards, replicas of a monument erected in France in honor of these black soldiers' gallantry during World War I, will go to William Hutchinson of Company C and Clinton Nichols, Jr., of the 243rd Engineer Company.

The purpose of the festivities and the re-awarding of the Croix de Guerre is "because they (Maryland) have never properly recognized us," says first Sgt. Lloy R. Scott, Sr., of Company C.

MSU economic conference

An economic education workshop about the impact of Reaganomics on labor, consumers, minorities and business will occur at Morgan State University April 24, in Jenkins 103.

The workshop will be conducted from 9 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Its purpose is to inform members of the Baltimore Public School System about Reaganomics.

Representatives from the AFL-CIO and the Baltimore Urban League will address these issues. Raymond V. Haysbert, president of Parks Sausage will be the guest luncheon speaker.

For more information about the workshop, call Dr. Annan Amegbe at 444-3274.

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