REMINISCENT OF OLD RAG PICKERS

New breed of entrepreneurs on the scene

'Cart people' trudge up and down alleys looking for cans

By Rebecca Kolberg (UPI)

A new breed of Baltimore entrepreneurs reminiscent of old-fashioned ray pickers has appeared on the urban scene, trundling battered grocery carts up and down alleys in search of recyclable aluminum cans.

At first glance, many of the "cart" people appear to belong to the mass of homeless people who frequent downtown areas of major U.S. cities. But most are far removed from that desperate world, if not so much by appearance as by attitude.

"Most of the cart people that come to me are in a good mood, friendly and nice. They know they aren't doing well, but until they can do better, they want to do something. They have what you would call "self-pride," said Nelson Cropper, who works for Reynolds Aluminum Recycling Co.

Willie Wilson, 71, has been collecting cans from garbage containers lining Baltimore's downtown alleys for about 1½ years. Wilson, who has a permanent address and subsists on meager Social Security payments, said he makes about $800 annually by selling cans to recycling centers.

"It's a lot of hard work. A lot of people turn up their noses and say they wouldn't do it. But as my father always said, half a loaf is better than nothing," said Wilson.

Twice a week, the former construction worker wheels his grocery cart out of his home and trudges about 1½ miles to the downtown alleys that are the prime collection grounds. Among the best stops along his route are bars and a couple of hospitals.

The rattle of Wilson's car and the "crunch-crunch" of his can stomping signals his approach to neighborhood residents. Some people save their beer cans for him, but he gets most of his booty by sorting through the trash ahead of city garbage collectors.

Wilson keeps detailed records of how many pounds of cans he gathers each week, noting that he collected at least 33,000 cans — or more than 1½ tons—in 1985.

"It's like I have my own business. I'm my own boss. I work when I want to," said Wilson, who carries a magnet to check cans that might leave too much steel to be suitable for recycling.

George Morris, also shown, unloads his cargo aluminum at his final destination. Receiving and weighing the cans aboard his truck is Nelson Cropper, whose firm operates its can-buying program from the back of truck trailers. As of December, the going price for clean, dry aluminum cans was 16 cents per pound. UPI.

The short, stocky man, who refers to his trade as "junkin'," is just one of thousands of people nationwide who depend on aluminum cans to eke out a livelihood.

"Cart" people are not limited to such major centers as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, St. Louis, Atlanta and Washington, D.C. Some scour the alleys of smaller cities like Richmond, Va., Wilmington, Del., and Laurel, Md.

Nelson Cropper, whose firm operates its aluminum can buying program out of the back of truck trailers, said dozens of recycling enthusiasts from doctors to Boy Scouts to senior citizens pull up daily at his stop near Baltimore's Memorial Stadium. Of that number, about 15 are "cart" people.

Most of them (cart people) are older, not many young people do it and when they do, they aren't steady. Most are men, but a few women do it also," Cropper said.

As of December, the price for clean, dry aluminum cans was 16 cents per pound for amounts ranging from 1 to 50 pounds. The price goes up slightly as the number of cans increases.

Reynolds also accepts aluminum scrap and castings, as well as aluminum foil and pie tins.

But beer cans remain the "cart" people's money-making staple.

Dozens of junkers gathered to pick cans off Memorial Stadium's parking lot following a recent college football game. Their carts also start clattering through alleys as early as 3 a.m. on weekends and holidays, in an effort to snatch up party-goers' discarded cans before the garbage trucks do.

One Baltimore professional couple delivered their weekly accumulation of beer cans to a collector named "Reds," who makes regular pickups at the Wharf Rat tavern near Baltimore's waterfront.

Mitch Snyder, of Washington, D.C.'s Community for Creative Non-Violence, said some of the homeless people he comes in contact with engage in can collecting.

"Those who do obviously are able to function to some degree, and are in better shape than those homeless people who can't function in society," Snyder said.

The social activist concurred with the view that can collecting sometimes serves as a temporary occupation, until a person gets back on his or her economic feet.

"People who are capable of collecting cans are capable of doing other things," he said.

One of a new breed of 'cart' people, George Morris pushes a battered grocery cart loaded with recyclable aluminum cans near Baltimore's Memorial Stadium recently. Although at first glance seemingly belonging to the mass of the homeless, most of the 'cart' people are 'entrepreneurs' reminiscent of old-fashioned rag pickers. UPI.

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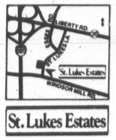

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Job opportunities program not in state budget plans

By Valerie Smith-Madden
AFRO Staff Writer

When Governor Harry Hughes unveiled his budget plans for the 1987 fiscal year last month, a few legislators found some things missing.

For Delegate Howard "Pete" Rawlings (D-40th), it was the Investment in Job Opportunities Program.

This program is designed to promote self-sufficiency and decrease unemployment among public assistance recipients by providing job training and work experience.

Maryland's proposed program would be closely patterned after a current program in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts' Employment and Training Choices require that all state welfare recipients register for the program.

They are then free to choose immediate job placement, on-the-job training, career planning, education, or none of the above.

Participants in the program retain welfare benefits and may also receive day-care vouchers, transportation subsidies, and free education and training.

Since it was launched in October 1983, more than 17,000 welfare parents have obtained full- or part-time jobs. It is a feat that Rawlings and others would like to see repeated here. "It's an impressive program, getting some impressive results," observed Rawlings.

But not everyone is impressed. "The Maryland Chamber of Commerce is not supporting it," said Rawlings. "They want Governor Hughes to spend money on economic development in the state instead of helping welfare mothers become independent."

Rawlings said it would take "about five or six million dollars to start the program." "It's a small investment to turn around the dependency that many single women are trapped in."

If the program were to be included in one of Gov. Hughes subsequent supplemental budgets, Rawlings speculated that it might be a joint venture of the Department of Human Resources and the Department of Employment and Training. Rawlings said the latter would be involved "because of the job training component."

Charles Krautler, vice president of public affairs for the Maryland Chamber of Commerce said, "We believe that the program is unnecessary. We're not opposed to the concept put forth in that proposal."

What they are opposed to said Krautler, is where the program would be placed. The Chamber of Commerce would oppose any affiliation with the Department of Human Resources.

Krautler said that in the past, that department had a job training and jobs initiatives component. "Three years ago, they said: we don't want it, we can't do it." The Maryland Chamber of Commerce would not like to see the services duplicated.

The Department of Employment and Training was created to handle job training and jobs initiatives. "We believe that this program can be done and should be done within existing program structures." Those structures are the Governor's Employment Council and/or the Department of Employment and Training.

Another argument by opponents of the program is that it may not actually elevate mothers into the highest of income brackets.

Rawlings said participants in the program would be placed in jobs which currently exist.

Some opponents aren't satisfied. They argue that while getting off of welfare and moving into the workforce is a good thing, getting a job making $4.50 or five dollars an hour is not enough for many welfare mothers who are heads of households.

Rawlings said that while the jobs "are not management positions," they are private sector jobs with no special salary scale. The jobs would also provide limited tax incentives to employers. Added one legislative observer, "You've got to start somewhere."

Krautler said his office has been in touch with the staff at the Governor's Employment Council. On the program's progress Krautler said, "we're not really doing anything to try to kill the proposal."

He indicated that if the proposal would be tailored to existing structures, his organization "would certainly reevaluate their position."

Rawlings said the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus has put the proposal in their position paper. "We're urging the House Leadership and Governor Hughes to include it in his supplemental budget.

"Most welfare recipients," said Rawlings, "would prefer to work."

—Black History Month

Continued from Page 1

Black Art Exhibition, MLK Gallery.

—Feb. 12: From Malcolm X to Minister Farrakhan, Campus Forum, Multipurpose Room, Wiseman College Center, 10 a.m. Night at The Cotton Club, CVD Ensemble with Margie Clark, PUB, 7:30 p.m.

—Feb. 14: "The Color Purple: Black Feminism In The 80's, "Panel Discussion, MLK Gallery 145, 12 noon.

—Feb. 15: International Anti-Apartheid Exhibition, Wiseman College Center Gallery.

—Feb. 18: Howard University Concert Choir Celebrates Black Music, MLK Auditorium 8:00 p.m.

—Feb. 18: Free South Africa Forum, 10 a.m., MLK Commons.

—Feb. 19: Legacy of Black Dance, MLK 145, 12 noon.

Piano Recital, Black Rag Time by John Young, MLK Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

—Feb. 21: Black Music in Tribute, Bowie State College Concert Band, 12 noon, MLK Commons. Cinques: Performing Artists, Wiseman College Center PUB, 7:30 p.m.

—Feb. 22: "A Soldier's Story," MLK Auditorium, 8 p.m. and more. For further information call 464-3346.

* * *

The Howard County Coalition for Black History will kick-off its Fifth Annual Black History Fair, Saturday, Feb. 22, at the Columbia Mall.

The exhibits will include the history of The Afro-American Newspapers, family and church histories, fraternity and sorority displays, African art and aspects of the lives of great black Americans. The entertainment will include gospel choirs, dancing, fashions and instrumental music.

* * *

A keynote speech by Elijah Cummings, chairman of the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus, will kick-off the University of Maryland's (Baltimore County's) program, "Black Political Leadership, Women, Work and Family, Feb. 17 at 6 p.m.

—Feb. 20: Deborah Gray White, of Rutgers University, will lecture at 7 p.m. in Lecture Hall III.

—Feb. 28: Ruth Polk Patterson, author of "The Seed of Sally Goodin: A Black Family of Arkansas" will lecture at 3 p.m., Lecture Hall III.

—March 6: Juliet E. K. Walker of the University of Illinois, a historian and author of "Free Frank: A Black Pioneer on the Antebellum Frontier," will speak at 7 p.m., Lecture Hall III.

The Cloisters Children's Museum on Falls road is offering events this year including:

—FEb. 9: Fellisco Keeling and Martha Ruff will present a program of folk tales, songs and true stories to celebrate Black History Month at 2 p.m.

Running currently, through March 16 "Images of Africa," with masks and photographs of native people is available for viewing.

* * *

The Walters Art Gallery has planned: "Sharing Traditions: Five Black Artists in Nineteenth Century America," and other rare collections will be exhibited through March 2.

* * *

David Driskell, of the University of Maryland, will discuss "Nineteenth Century Afro-American Art: A Survey," 8 p.m., Wednesday in Graham Auditorium.

Photographs and memorabilia of baseball great, Frank Robinson, marking his 1966 Orioles season and the World Series will be on display at the University of Maryland Baltimore County's Albin O. Kuhn Gallery and Library through Feb. 28.

* * *

"Glimpses. . .Our Black Heritage'—an hour of stories, games, music and craft for children in grades two to four, at 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Feb. 17 in the Meeting Room of Central Library, 10375 Little Patuxent Pkwy., Columbia. Registration begins Feb. 10. Call 997-8000, Ext. 254.

* * *

The Pascal Center Art Gallery at Anne Arundel Community College presents an exhibition on black soldiers, from the Banneker-Douglass Museum of Afro-American Life and History, through Feb. 28.

"Bloods"—the experiences of black servicemen in Vietnam, as told by award-winning journalist and author, Wallace Terry, Feb. 11, 7:30 p.m., Pascal Center, 101 College Pkwy., Arnold.

* * *

The First Baptist Church, the oldest black Baptist Church of Maryland, will celebrate its 150th birthday at the Maryland Historic Society, Feb. 9 at 2:30 p.m.

* * *

"The Angel that Stands By Me," a documentary on 89-year-old black folk artist, Minnie Evans and the 1933 film, "The Emperor Jones," based on Eugene O'Neil's play will show at Graham Auditorium, Walters Art Gallery, Feb. 12 at 8 p.m.

A parent/child workshop entitled "Family Life" will be hosted by the Walters Art Gallery, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Feb. 15, Graham Auditorium. Other activities will include films and the making of a photo montage. Registration is required.

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The 1973 film, "Five on the Black Hand Side"-will be shown Feb. 26, 8 p.m., Graham Auditorium (Walters Art Gallery). A discussion led by Thomas Cripps will follow the movie.

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Leslie King-Hammond, dean of graduate studies, Maryland Institute College of Art, will lecture, "On Being a Black Artist in 20th Century America," Feb. 25, 8 p.m., Graham Auditorium. Exhibitions following lecture, 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

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A celebration of Afro-American art and culture, Feb. 23, noon to 4 p.m., Graham Auditorium (Walters Art Gallery). Activities include short films, poetry, dance, quilting demonstration, puppet show, mural making and dramatization from the life of Sojourner Truth.

—Black History Month

Continued from page 1

Mrs. Gertrude Ford Dennis, of Washington, D.C., will exhibit her work titled, "Black Authors Historical Culture" at the Black American Museum, 1769 Caswell St., Sunday, Feb. 9, 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Activities at Bowie State College will include:

—Feb. 10. Career and Challenges for Today's Black Lawyer, MLK faculty Lounge, 12 noon.

—Black History

Continued from page 1

Tour and exhibition of the "Sharing Traditions" and "Harlem Portraits," Feb. 19 and 26 at 1 p.m., Centre Street entrance, Walters Art Gallery. Admission is free.

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Rosalind Jeffries, education coordinator, Museum Center for African Art in New York, will lecture on "The 19th Century Afro-American Aesthetic," Feb. 18, 8 p.m., Graham Auditorium (Walters Art Gallery).

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On Feb. 19 at 8 p.m., "Lost in the Stars," a 1973 film adaptation of Alan Paton's "Cry the Beloved Country," Graham Auditorium (Walters Art Gallery).

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Dominique-Rene de Lerma, professor of music, Morgan State University and Peabody Conservatory of Music, will lecture on "Victories within Restrictions: The 19th Century Afro-American Composer." Feb. 19, 10:30 a.m., Graham Auditorium (Walters Art Gallery).

For smooth gravy, combine equal parts of flour and cornstarch. Put three or four tablespoons in a jar and add about a half-cup of water. Shake and in a few minutes you'll have a smooth paste to turn into gravy.

—Senate bill

(Continued from page 3)

with children are being denied a decent home in the neighborhood of their choice," declared Mathias.

Mathias noted that a recent HUD study shows that three-fourths of all rental housing bars or restricts families with children. "This results in an artificial shortage of housing for families with children," he said.

'In every state of the union some families with children are forced to double up, split up or go homeless because they encounter outright exclusion in their search for decent housing," he said.

"The complaints of housing discrimination against children continue to mount at state and local human relations agencies," continued Mathias, "but, in many instances, those agencies are unable to take action because their state law does not prohibit such discrimination."

Mathias stressed the importance of extending the protection of the law to include disabled persons as well as families with children.

"The Urban Institute estimates there are over 25 million adults disabled by physical or mental impairments, including two million disabled and institutionalized adults," he observed. "By the year 2,000, the United States Census Bureau estimates there will be 32 million Americans over the age of 85 years, and thus, more prone to physical frailties, disabling diseases, and mental impairments."

Noting that 'with our continued emphasis on deinstitutionalization, more and more disabled persons — many of them our own parents, brothers, sisters, and children — will be seeking independent living in residential settings," Mathias stressed the importance of extending the protection of the act to include the disabled. 'Denial of housing to disabled persons will continue their dependency on family and institutional care at high dollar and social costs," added Mathias.

Noting that this nation recently celebrated its first Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, Mathias recalled that "Dr. King knew only too well the price of discriminatory housing for any American society.

"Dr. King's dream was the American dream — a decent home in the neighborhood. of one's choice," said Mathias. 'How disturbing to read now, 18 years after the death of this national leader of justice, peace, and racial equality, that violence, intimidation, and tension are still rearing their ugly heads in certain neighborhoods, schools, and college campuses.

'What a fitting memorial to Dr. King it would be for this Congress to take up his challenge to each of us and make part of his American dream a reality by enacting this fair housing bill."

The Mathias-Kennedy bill has been introduced in each Congress since 1977. In 1980, a companion bill passed the House of Representatives, but died in the Senate after a nine-day filibuster.

This bill differs slightly from legislation previously introduced in that it dispenses with a Fair Housing Review Commission thereby shortening the time for a final decision on housing discrimination complaints.

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