Richmond Urban League marks 75 years service, with new name

By Sharon E. Wilkerson
AFRO Staff Writer

RICHMOND

After 75 years of community service, the Richmond Urban League has stepped out this year upon an even greater frontier.

A name change to the "Urban League of Greater Richmond Inc." marks the start of a year-long celebration of the agency's commitment to serve the residents of Richmond, Henrico, Chesterfield and Hanover.

Officials and dignitaries of Richmond and surrounding counties attended a recent news conference and ribbon cutting ceremony at the Urban League Office, 101 E. Clay St., instituting the name change.

"The new name means that more people of the surrounding counties will recognize that the Urban League is available to serve them," said Randolph C. Kendall, Jr., executive director of the Urban League for more than 20 years. Kendall's lifework has been focused upon the League and its commitment to helping minorities.

Councilman Roy A. West said the agency's name change broadens its scope.

"I think it broadens the scope of the Urban League's long-standing commitment, and that is to help people and to make itself felt in the wider community," said West. "...The community itself will benefit from this expansion."

The Urban League has "broadened our vision" to include many residents living in the Richmond metropolitan area "whereby opportunities... can be made available to them in a more direct way," said Councilman Walter T. Kenney.

Kenney said the name change also offers residents and citizens an option to "accept those opportunities and utlize them to the best of their ability."

Since 1913, the Urban League has been devoted to helping minorities and the poor in Richmond and surrounding areas by providing employment opportunities, leadership development and educational programs.

"The seed was planted for the Richmond Urban League" by Ora Brown, president of the Richmond Neighborhood Association, according to Kendall. After a year of operation, the Richmond Neighborhood Association changed its name to the Richmond Negro Welfare League and William Colson, a professor of economics at Virginia Union University, became director.

In 1920, the Richmond Welfare League was transferred to the Richmond Associated Charities due to a lack of operating funds. The agency provided employment opportunities and served as a bureau of statistics.

This community service attracted the National Urban League to Richmond and Colson, said Kendall. On Dec. 1, 1923, the Richmond Urban League was established and M. C. Winfrey was appointed executive head.

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