



POSTED ON FEBRUARY 23, 2007
 ORIGINALLY POSTED ON FRI, FEB. 23, 2007

A LIBRARY GETS HOPE AT GERMANTOWN HIGH

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The list of graduates of Germantown High School includes the names of the high and mighty.

Judith Jamison, the dancer and artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; Lynne Abraham, Philadelphia district attorney; Kevin Eubanks, band leader on the "Tonight Show" and state Rep. Dwight Evans are just a few who graced the halls of the school at Germantown Avenue and High Street.

Tonight the Germantown Alumni Association, which is launching a new campaign called "the Library Project" - to raise funds to renovate and restock the school's library - will be getting a help from a higher authority.

For what had been one fundraiser scheduled tonight has turned into two events that will help the alumni reach its goals.

"A Walk Down Memory Lane," is a gathering of alumni at 7 p.m. at the school's gymnasium, said Vera Primus, president of the Germantown Alumni Association. It will include a tour of the school and its library along with entertainment from a live band. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door.

Also at 7 tonight, there will be concert of gospel songs by the Rev. Alyn E. Waller, pastor of Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church, held at the historic Tindley Temple United Methodist Church at Broad and Fitzwater streets in South Philadelphia. Tickets are \$10 and a part of the proceeds will be donated to help the library.

"When I walked into the library and saw the shelves were totally empty, my mouth had fallen open," said Primus.

She said Germantown's library was stripped of practically all its books in 2003 when the Middle States Accreditation Agency removed the books because they were in poor condition and outdated.

The alumni group already has approached an architect to consult on renovations and wants to buy new books and computers and even add a video-conferencing room, she said.

So how did one fundraiser become two?

Rev. LeRoi Simmons, an associate minister of Enon Tabernacle, lives in the neighborhood and became active with the Germantown Clergy Collaborative in 2004 after a teenager was shot outside the school.

Simmons said he and other members of the clergy group now help the school's literacy program, mentor students and stand outside the school to watch over students as they arrive for and leave school.

Simmons said when he went into the library, "what I saw was so dismal, it brought tears to my eyes."

Simmons said he keeps Waller, senior pastor at his church, informed about what he is doing at the school. When Waller learned of the library effort, he already had scheduled a concert at Tindley Temple for tonight and he volunteered to donate Enon's share of the proceeds to the library project.

Waller couldn't be reached for comment yesterday.

But Al Bichner, the school district's deputy chief academic officer for high schools, said the district is grateful for the help.

"For schools to be successful, they have to be embraced by the community," Bichner said.

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