

NEWS-RECORD

of Maplewood and South Orange

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Above left, Columbia High School senior Theresa Desir performs Nina Simone's 'To Be Young, Gifted and Black,' accompanied by the Bufford School



Photos by Kaanita Iyer

of Music Faculty Band. Above right, community leaders join hands to sing 'We Shall Overcome,' concluding the event.

Two towns unite to remember Dr. King

Community members from Maplewood and South Orange honor King's legacy at annual CCR event

By Kaanita Iyer
Staff Writer

The South Orange-Maplewood Community Coalition on Race united the two towns to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s message of love, equality and acceptance Jan. 16, with its 16th annual MLK Observance and Volunteer Fair.

The event, previously held at religious institutions, was hosted by Columbia High School for the first time in order to accommodate the growing number of attendees. The larger space also accommodated those

attending the Volunteer Fair, held after the observance to demonstrate the value of service advocated by King. The fair, held in the CHS Cafeteria, included organizations such as the Domestic Violence Response Team, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and the Court Appointed Special Advocates.

Residents from the two towns and beyond, of different races, skin colors, religions, genders and ages, filled the CHS Auditorium for the observance, exemplifying the integration King dreamed of decades ago.

The program commenced with an intro-

duction from Barbara Velasquez, a member of the CCR's MLK Committee, who said, "Martin Luther King's words and legacy has been an inspiration to all of us. But even more so at this time as we enter into President Obama's last week as our president."

She urged the audience to "please think of ways that (they) can be a starter to promote social justice ... to stand up for those groups that are going to be most impacted by this new administration."

Like Velasquez, other speakers mentioned the election of Donald Trump and

stressed the timeliness and significance of conducting such dialog.

CCR Executive Director Nancy Gagnier said, "We're facing the eve of the 45th president's inauguration and many of us feel ourselves to be on shifting ground, looking for foothold. But let me tell you, all of you people here today, we need activists now."

LaShawn Warren, the event's featured speaker, is a public interest attorney with nearly two decades of service and an activist in her own right. Warren is the newly

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SOVCA provides 2016 overview, looks ahead at 2017

By Yael Katzner
Managing Editor

total expense is \$331,600. Income is expected to come from

SOVCA was created back in 2012 with a five-year vision

