

Greenville News Editorial: Help celebrate King's dream

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Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream for this great nation, a dream in which equal rights were extended to all American citizens, whites and blacks could sit down together “at the table of brotherhood” and black children were judged by their character instead of their color.

That dream is alive today. And that dream will be celebrated throughout this nation during many ceremonies and events remembering Dr. King and his unparalleled effort to bridge the gap between this nation’s ideals and practices that betrayed those ideals.

In many places, including Greenville County, all of these events will take on extra meaning because Monday, Jan. 17, marks the 25th anniversary of the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday. Official recognition of the MLK holiday was a long time coming to Greenville County — an embarrassingly long time coming. Greenville County was the last county in South Carolina to adopt the third Monday in January as an official county holiday. It took personal courage and political change for Greenville County to join the rest of the country in properly honoring King’s life and accomplishments.

The official holiday and all the celebrations and events are appropriate. King forced America to understand that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” King was the most eloquent voice in a civil rights movement that confronted hatred and racism. He brought a healing message and preached nonviolent change.

In January 2006, the first year that Greenville County recognized MLK Day as an official holiday, an organization of civic and business leaders made sure the weekend would have profound meaning in our county for that year and others to follow. The MLK Dream Weekend was formed, and since 2006 it has featured a large banquet and many other opportunities to remember King’s life and celebrate his legacy.

Activities this year begin a week earlier than customary with tonight’s Liberty Bridge Candlelight Vigil and Prayer Walk. There will be a half-hour program that focuses on unity. “This brief program is designed to impact our community through a demonstration of unity as we focus our hearts and minds on the goals of MLK Dream Weekend and the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,” Nika White, MLK Dream Weekend director of marketing, said in a recent statement.

The Diversity Banquet, to be held a week from tonight, will feature a compelling speaker, Coach Herman Boone, who was the subject of the Disney movie “Remember the Titans.” The movie

was about the 1971 football team that helped unify blacks and whites who had seen their once-segregated schools close so students could attend desegregated schools.

A number of activities will be taking place over the next week or so. Many are connected with MLK Dream Weekend but there certainly will be others in the area, too. Some of the events include:

- MLK Liberty Bridge Prayer Vigil — Today at 7 p.m. Meet at Bowater side of Liberty Bridge (in the event of inclement weather venue will be changed to the West End Community Center). This will be a symbolic unity gathering and candlelight vigil across Liberty Bridge with a prayer, unity litany and more. All attendees are asked to please bring a candle for the occasion.
- 2011 MLK Diversity Banquet — Friday, Jan. 14, at 7 p.m. at the Carolina First Center. The keynote speaker will be Coach Herman Boone, who was the inspirational coach featured in the Disney movie “Remember the Titans” starring Academy Award-winner Denzel Washington. Banquet tickets are on sale at Valley Brook Outreach Baptist Church, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Greenville County Human Relations Commission, BJ’s Music or online at the website mlkdreamweekend.com.
- Champions of Dreams Community Involvement Day — Saturday, Jan. 15, from 10 a.m. to noon at Sterling Community Center. This will be a non-profit showcase of approximately 30 agencies, on-site volunteer opportunities, refreshments and activities for all ages.
- Dreams in Action — Monday, Jan. 17, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Greenville High School. This will be a day of action consisting of workshops, entertainment, a free lunch and the presentation of the “2011 Win a Dream” recipients.