

New Orleans Picayune

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SPIRIT 'N SPICE
Marilyn Stearns

Hark, the heralded choirs sing

The 23rd annual Christmas presentation of Handel's "Messiah," congregational singing and "A Spiritual Christmas: A Heritage for the Holidays" with the New Orleans Black Chorale headline the Christmas celebration this weekend at Trinity Episcopal Church, 1329 Jackson Ave. Both events are free.

On Sunday at 5 p.m., the Trinity Choir and a cast of musicians will present the Christmas portion of Handel's "Messiah" under the direction of **Albin Prizintzas**, Trinity's director of music ministries.

Featured soloists are **Aaron Borst**, **Amanda Borst**, **Annelise Casar**, **Diane Jennings**, **Vicki Moran**, **Susana Ramirez**, **Kevin Bouchell**, **Laurance Ozanberger**, **Chris Turgeon**, and **Heath Hatfield**. **Juan Montes** will direct an ensemble of instrumentalists. Prizintzas will accompany on Trinity's 5,000-pipe mechanical-action organ.

Prizintzas said Handel's work is a poignant piece for today's uncertain times.

"Handel wrote the 'Messiah' towards the middle of the 18th century in Ireland. This oratorio is a story over the chest that was looming over Europe at that time," Prizintzas said. "We hope our annual Messiah sing-along to be more meaningful than ever before. The healing power of music in turbulent times cannot be overestimated."

Choral sheet music will be provided for audience use during the sing-along portion of the service. The event is held every year on the second Sunday of December.

"We expect everyone who leaves to be rejoicing," Prizintzas said.

Coupled with the event is the annual Christmas Concert of the New Orleans Black Chorale on Saturday at 7 p.m. Under the direction of **John E. Ware**, the program will spotlight Christmas spirituals and the works of African-American composers.

Featured will be "A Savior Is Born," by **Jalonda Robertson**, a nationally published composer, the director of music ministries at St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church and a musician for the Archdiocese of New Orleans Mass Gospel Choir.

Prizintzas will accompany on the organ. The chorale's 20-year tradition of joining the audience in singing Handel's Hallelujah Chorus will conclude the service.

For more information, visit www.trinitynola.com or call

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Student activist has his path cut out for him

Duane Cruse recently lobbied in Washington

By **Richard Thompson**
Contributing writer

Duane Cruse got an early lesson in community activism as a high school student at McDonough 35, where he led an organization called **Voices of the Students**.

The group, made up of teenagers from across the city, hobnobbed with local officials, discussed issues and made recommendations on a range of topics affecting them, such as the state of the schools.

It was an early taste of organizing for Cruse, but far from his most high-profile experience.

Cruse, 21, a political science student at Tuskegee University in Alabama, was in a contingent of Gulf Coast residents called the **Katrina Citizens Leadership Corps** that attended a September conference in Washington

to push lawmakers to reform the **Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988**, the federal law that defines the current federal and state roles in disaster relief.

Like many New Orleanians rebuilding their homes in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Cruse said he learned firsthand about the discrepancies between the federal government's response to natural disasters at home and its approach abroad.

"We weren't upset about the

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Duane Cruse stands outside the U.S. Capitol during his recent visit to Washington, D.C.

PLAYING NICE



PHOTOS BY RUSTY COSTANZA / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

Sean Tate jumps rope with students at **Abramson Science and Technology Charter School** in New Orleans. **Playworks**, a national organization, uses recess time to teach children conflict resolution and how to play in fun, safe ways. **Tulane University graduate student Sean Tate** works with the children at Abramson.

Peaceful recesses become child's play

Playground bullying at schools has decreased

By **Mary Rickard**
Contributing writer

School recess can become a melee, with students fighting over the ball and excluding others from the games. **Playground fights** have occurred so frequently at some campuses that outdoor playtime has been eliminated altogether.

But that is changing at four New Orleans elementary schools participating in



LEFT: Third-grader **Jada Griffin** is all smiles while playing a game during recess at Abramson. RIGHT: **Tate** high-fives a student.



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Bring holiday cheer to seniors

Program invites you to 'Be a Santa'

By **Eva Jacob Barkoff**
East Jefferson bureau

A program that has provided more than 1,500 gifts to local seniors citizens during the past four holiday seasons is being planned again this year.

Home Instead Senior Care in Metairie will sponsor the "Be a Santa to a Senior" program and has partnered with local retailers and agencies including **East-Jefferson General Hospital**, **People's Health Network**, **Humana**, **Omni Home Care**, **Interim Health Care**, **Total Health Solutions**, the **Visiting Nurses Association** and **Kindred Hospital** to ensure that local seniors in nursing homes or who live alone will receive a gift during the holidays.

"The holidays are often considered a time for children, but seniors — especially those who are isolated and lonely — need to be remembered as well," said **Lisa Rabito** with **Home Instead Senior Care** in Metairie, which provides services to senior citizens in Orleans and Jefferson parishes. "The 'Be a Santa to a Senior' program is also designed to help stimulate human contact and social interaction for older adults who are unlikely to have visitors during the holidays."

The participating nursing homes and senior housing facilities identify the needs of seniors and provide those names to **Home Instead Senior Care**.

Christmas trees, located at **So Chic and Ponsetti's Shoes** in Clearview Mall, as well as two Walmart locations — **8848 Veterans Memorial Blvd.**, Metairie, and **300 West Esplanade Ave.**,

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GETTING IN TOUCH

To report community news, call the New Orleans office at 504.826.3310

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WHERE I'M AT IN NEW NEW ORLEANS



DAWN ROGERS / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

SMART MOVES

Children assemble Lego structures at a play table at the Louisiana Championship First Lego League 2009 Smart Move Challenge at St. Mary's Dominican High School gym on Nov. 21. Fifty teams from middle schools around the state competed with remote-controlled robots made of Legos, with 20 trophies awarded for design, team work, project and performance.