

THE BUFFALO NEWS

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## 35 forming inaugural Buffalo class of 100 Black Men of America

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NEWS STAFF REPORTER  
July 24, 2009, 6:47 AM /

A group of 35 African-American men Saturday will comprise the inaugural class of the Greater Buffalo Chapter of 100 Black Men, becoming part of the national organization 100 Black Men of America.

And the local group already has big plans for addressing some of the problems plaguing young, black males in Buffalo, including literacy, unemployment and obesity. Mentoring will be a big focus.

“Young men will be what they see,” said James Payne, an educator with Buffalo Public Schools who co-founded the local chapter with Buffalo School Superintendent James A. Williams.

“We intend to provide professional men to influence the direction of these males. We will be dealing with young males who are fatherless,” Payne said, adding that all mentors have to be certified by the national office.

“We’re not the answer to all of the problems. We’re just providing some sense of direction,” he said.

There are more than 30,000 members in 110 chapters in the United States and abroad. The Buffalo chapter will follow mandates set by the national organization to sponsor programs and activities that focus on education, health and wellness, mentoring and economic development.

Local efforts will include adopting two schools, mentoring at-risk male students age 8 to 18 on a regular basis and tracking them beyond high school.

Next May, the group will take about 80 male students on a tour of historically black colleges and universities throughout the country.

“They don’t all have to be A students. There will be some Cs and Ds, too,” Payne said.

The Buffalo group also is organizing a one-to two-week summer camp for young males. The camp will focus on education, computer technology and math as well as recreation activities, Payne said.

“We see a lot of young males sitting on the corner and sitting around the house in the summer. By addressing the needs of children, you address the needs of parents,” Payne said. “It’s about trying to change the thought process, and that’s what we’re about the business of doing.”

100 Black Men’s reach will not be limited to African-American males, but will also encompass Latino males and others.

“We’ll focus on women, girls and the whole family in terms of addressing some of the problems in our community,” Payne said.

Saturday’s induction ceremony for the new chapter will be held from noon to 2 p. m. in Roswell Park Cancer Institute’s Center of Excellence, at Virginia Street near Ellicott Street.

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