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Community Advocate



Westborough civil rights advocate helps keep MLK Jr.'s dream alive



Yvonne Brown with the Silver Life Membership Award plaque. (Photo/submitted)

By Lori Berkey, Contributing Writer

Jan 4, 2015 Westborough – When Yvonne Brown joined Girl Scouts, she took her pledge of service to others to heart and remained true to it ever since. Last fall, the Westborough resident was elected board secretary of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Worcester, a branch that was dormant until she helped resurrect it a few years ago.

Influenced by her grandfather and her mother, Brown dedicates herself to human rights advocacy and volunteerism. Now a role model for her 5-year-old granddaughter Sydney, Brown recently walked beside the young girl in Birmingham, Ala., tracing the steps of a section of the civil rights march that John Lewis, of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, led in 1965 across the Edmond Pettus Bridge.

Like Lewis, Brown involved herself in student activities when she was in school. In college, she pledged to the Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority. She remains actively involved in charity endeavors through AKA's alumni branch.

Also like Lewis, Brown steps forward and makes her voice heard.

"If we want to have a safer world," Brown said, "we have to work and be vigilant and question things that are not right, and speak out and speak up. Too many things are happening, and people are working together. It's not a matter of black versus white. Everyone is coming together to realize, it could be anyone's child."

In August, Brown participated in a drug overdose rally at City Hall in Worcester with NAACP Worcester and others. Last March, she attended Legislative Day at the Massachusetts State House as an advocate with Westborough librarians.

Brown serves on the board and membership committee for the South Middlesex Opportunity Council and is a member of the New Vision Foundation for the Greater Framingham Community Church. Through her volunteerism for the church, she helps organize workshops and programs for children for Martin Luther King Jr. Day. She aims to keep his dream alive.

"It's not a closed society," Brown said. "People need to be involved. We can't just sit home and say 'let someone else do it.' You have to be there on the ground floor to help make decisions."

Brown's prolific volunteerism has brought her recognition. Last March, she received the Woman of Purpose Award for community service from the Delta Sigma Theta sorority. She also earned a Lifetime Membership Award from NAACP last September.

Brown's service to NAACP includes being the former president of the South Middlesex branch, a liaison for the New England Area Conference (NEAC), which is comprised of NAACP New England branches. After helping revive the Worcester branch, she served them as a member-at-large, prior to becoming secretary.

A go-to person for help wherever needed, Brown feels good about her new role as secretary for the NAACP Worcester branch.

"The branch can't exist without a secretary," she said, and encourages fellow residents to become active in the chapter.

"There are so many exciting things; I wish I could do more. Come join us," she said.