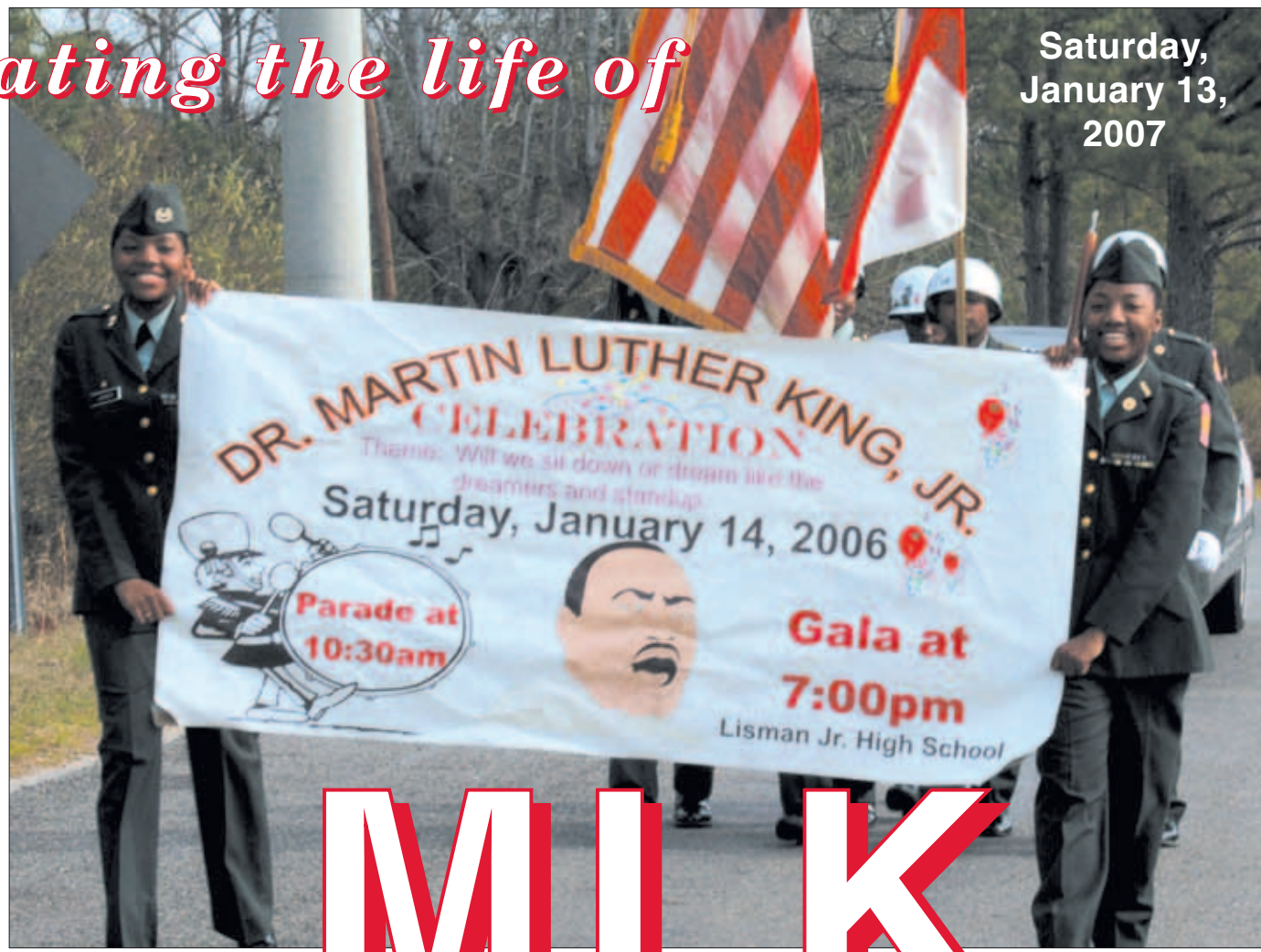


Celebrating the life of

Saturday,
January 13,
2007



MLK speech recitation
Joe Johnson



MLK



Choctaw Sun photos by Dee Ann Campbell and Marcus Gates



Moving beyond the 'dream'

■ Seletha Butler challenges MLK gala attendees

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

LISMAN — “Dreams are a reflection of what has consumed our minds and hearts,” Seletha Butler told the crowd who gathered at the 3rd annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Gala in Lisman on Sunday evening. “Who explained the importance of dreams better than Dr. Martin Luther King?”

In the keynote address for the gala event, the young Choctaw County native gave an inspirational challenge to those in attendance at the event, which was held in the Lisman Municipal Complex. In addition to Butler’s speech, the event included musical selections by the Choctaw County High School JROTC choir and

members of local churches, and a rousing recitation of Dr. King’s most famous speeches by local resident Joe Johnson.

Butler highlighted the theme of the event as she challenged the audience to continue the dream expressed by Dr. King in 1963, and to not only remember the dream but to move beyond it. The speech was laced with references to King’s vision for equality among the races, and was augmented by the passionate oration of someone who had seen her own dreams come to fruition.

A native of Lisman, Butler attended school at the former Butler Elementary and graduated as valedictorian of the Choctaw County High School Class of 1989. She went on the graduate summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science degree in corporate finance from the University of Alabama in 1992.

But Butler was not finished with her education. Following her own dream of becoming a lawyer, she graduated from Harvard Law School in 1996.



Seletha Butler

Today, Butler practices technology, procurement, and global transaction law for SunTrust Banks, Inc., at the corporation’s headquarters in Atlanta. Her achievements also include serving as shareholder for the Butler Law Firm, Inc., serving as chairperson for the Board of Directors of Hayden & Butler

Funeral Home, and serving as a member of SBWL Ventures, LLC.

Her accomplishments include becoming a member of the Georgia and Illinois bars, as well as being admitted to the Supreme Court of both states, the United States District Court for the Northern Districts of Georgia and of Illinois, and the Superior Court of Georgia.

Butler credited her parents, the late Anthony and Elizabeth Butler — both former mayors of Lisman — for her success in life.

“Without them I would not be where I am today, or go where I will go in the future,” Butler stated. “They gave me the ability to dream.”

Having fulfilled many of her own dreams, Butler challenged those at Sunday evening’s banquet to remember the person whose dream changed history.

“On August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., made a change to the landscape of America,” said Butler. “He made his ‘I have a dream’ speech. Almost 44 years later, we must analyze whether we’ve

lost the dream.”

However, Butler stated, Dr. King’s vision was not just about dreaming, but about going beyond the dream to believing, expecting, and receiving the fruit of those dreams.

“Who should dream?” asked Butler, adding that dreaming is necessary for everyone, black and white, who wants to achieve great things. “I am a dreamer. I dream to keep life interesting. I dream of better and brighter days.”

Butler challenged the young people at the event to continue to dream in order to pursue a better and brighter future themselves.

“It’s a necessary and important part of development for young people,” Butler told them. “It is the foundation for future achievement. When you have a dream, you see things that others will not see.”

“Dream the impossible,” she challenged. “Dream about what you want to become, not what others want you to be.”

But, Butler added, dreaming must not stop at the dream.

“We must also move beyond the dream and go to the believing,” she said. “After the dream is put in your heart, you must believe in it.”

Moving beyond belief, the dreamer must move forward expecting great things.

“If you try something, you will never fail,” explained Butler. “You may not reach the level you want to achieve, but you will learn along the way, and that’s not failing.”

Above all, Butler stated, dreamers must make plans from their dreams and take action to make them happen.

“Make plans expecting your dreams to work out,” she explained. “Do not depend on others to pull your weight...and once you achieve success, help others along the way.”

Butler concluded her challenging speech with a reference to the evening’s theme and to the dream that was initiated by Dr. King over 40 years ago.

“Close your eyes, and stand up, stand up, stand up,” she said with passion. “Then dream, dream, dream ... like the Dreamer.”