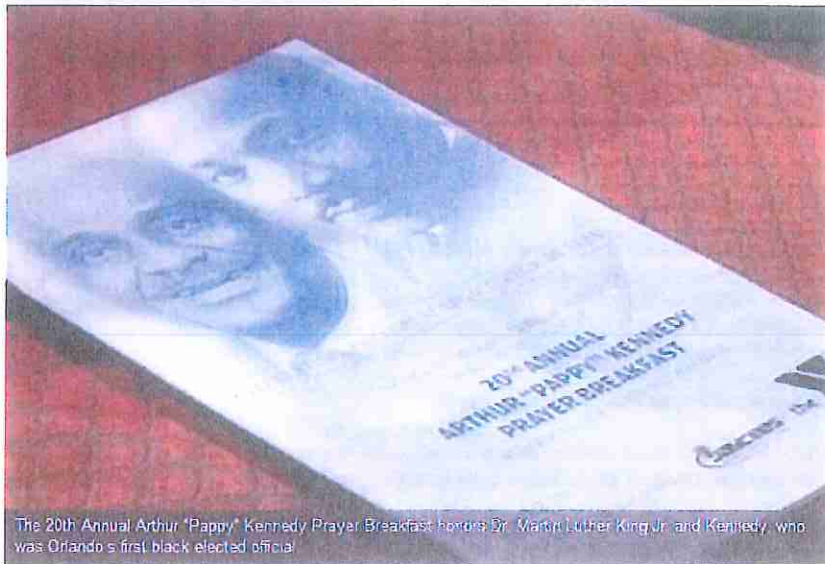




Annual 'Pappy' Kennedy prayer breakfast celebrates 20 years



The 20th Annual Arthur "Pappy" Kennedy Prayer Breakfast honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Kennedy, who was Orlando's first black elected official.

By Mark Jenkins, Reporter

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ORLANDO -- It's an annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day tradition, now celebrating two whole decades.

Nearly 1,000 people are expected at the breakfast table Monday morning to celebrate the lives and legacies of both Dr. King and a local legend.

The 20th Annual Arthur "Pappy" Kennedy Prayer Breakfast begins at 7:45 a.m. at First Baptist Orlando.

Tickets are \$45 for the event, benefiting the Arthur Pappy" Kennedy Memorial Scholarship Fund.

The event has gotten bigger each year. About 600 people attended 2010's breakfast, and organizers said they expect an additional 400 on Monday.

The interest this year was so big, organizers said they had to turn away some people, because there would not be enough room for everyone.

It honors Arthur "Pappy" Kennedy, who became Orlando's first black elected official.

Kennedy barely won a 1972 election to become a City Council member.

He went on to change the lives of many Orlando youth through the promotion of education and hard work.

At Monday's breakfast, those in attendance will hear from a man who shares those same beliefs.

Dr. Benjamin Carson, a neurosurgeon given the Healthcare Humanitarian Award for enhancing human lives, is scheduled to speak.

About Arthur "Pappy" Kennedy

Born in River Junction -- in Gadsden County, just south of the Florida-Georgia border -- Kennedy's family moved to Orlando, where he attended Johnson Academy and Jones High School, and then onto Bethune-Cookman College.

There was no stronger advocate of higher education than "Pappy" Kennedy. A man always involved in the community, he was the organizer of the Orlando Negro Chamber of Commerce, president of the Jones High School Parent-Teacher Association, and was instrumental in organizing the Orange County Parent-Teacher Council.

Yet for all his accomplishments, Kennedy is best known for being Orlando's first African-American City Commissioner.

But he barely made it there. Kennedy lost the first time he ran, and narrowly won in 1972, only after a four-month court battle over contested absentee ballots.

Kennedy was 58 when he was elected to Orlando's City Council in 1972, and served until 1980.

He died in March 2000 at age 86, but Arthur "Pappy" Kennedy's name and legacy lives on today.

In addition to the annual prayer breakfast, a yearly scholarship bears his name, and an Orlando post office has been dedicated in his honor.