

# Happenings

## 100,000 expected for big music weekend



Larry Bland is excited that 35-member Volunteer Choir will be part of the upcoming Richmond Folk Festival.

"It's a distinct honor," said the veteran leader of the popular award-winning Richmond choral group that is marking its 40th anniversary.

The choir will be the gospel entry for the diverse and international musical showcase that is expected to attract more than 100,000 music fans to the Downtown riverfront this weekend.

The festival is modeled on the National Folk Festival, which spent three consecutive years here. Richmond's version of the festival will launch, rain or shine, at 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 10. It will continue on Saturday, Oct. 11 and wind up on Sunday, Oct. 12.



Mr. Bland

offer percussion workshops for young people.

Mr. Bhagat is pleased that the drum ensemble he helped found 11 years ago to provide a positive outlet for youth will be among the featured performers. He said the festival is an opportunity to spread the upbeat message of Drums No Guns to a wider audience.

Richmond-based, finger-picking guitarist Todd Hallawell also will have a turn. He is to play duets with Robin Kessinger, a flat-pick guitarist from West Virginia.

Overall, the festival will showcase 30 other performing groups — ranging from a Jamaican reggae band to a Texas polka group, a Mississippi fife and drum corps and an African blues group — on seven different stages.

present Appalachian banjo tunes, while James Cheechoo of Moose Factory, Ontario, is to serve up Cree fiddling.

Other examples of the diversity on tap will include Grupo Cimarrón of Colombia performing traditional joropo music, a harp-led style that combines Spanish, African and new world music, and The Cellicion Traditional Zuni Singers presenting the dancing, drumming, singing and flute playing of the native Zuni people of New Mexico.

The festival also will include shadow puppetry from Java, traditional Cajun and Arabic music, and a cross-section of fare from Japan, Eastern Europe and Ireland.

The festival also will offer a view of the social, cultural and religious traditions of Virginia immigrants from Mongolia, Guatemala, Sudan, Cambodia and a host of other countries. Traditional craftsmen also will demonstrate their skills



Nukariik, Inuit throat singing, from Quebec.



Liadan, Irish music, from Ireland.



The Itals, roots reggae, from Jamaica and Washington.



The Cellicion Traditional Zuni Singers from New Mexico

The festival, which will sprawl between 2nd and 7th streets south of Canal Street and include Brown's Island, will be free and open to the public.

Mr. Bland's choir, which will perform at 2:15 p.m. Sunday, follows in the musical footsteps of Richmond gospel groups such as the First African Baptist Church Singers and Maggie Ingram and the Ingramettes, which performed at the national festival in previous years.

To Mr. Bland, a member of the Free Press administrative staff, the festival is one more "big stage" for the Volunteer Choir, which is based at Second Baptist Church in the city's Randolph area. The group has won a large following and numerous awards for its distinct brand of gospel which promotes brotherhood and goodwill.

Richmond also will be represented by Drum No Guns, a youth ensemble led by city schoolteacher Ram Bhagat. His group will perform several times on Saturday and Sunday and also will

Featured acts will include Tezcatlipoca Voladores from Veracruz, Mexico, performing the Aztec "Sun Dance," which involves jumping from the top of a 90-foot pole and swinging slowly to the ground in circles from ropes tied to the ankles.

The reggae sounds will come from The Itals of Kingston, Jamaica, known for their combination of soaring three-part harmonies, socially conscious lyrics and danceable grooves.

Mark Halata and Texavia of Webster, Texas, will share unique polka music, a blend of Tex-Mex, Czech and western honky-tonk, while Sharde Thomas & the Rising Star Fife and Drum Band from Sardis, Miss., will offer a revival of the pre-blues music she learned from her grandfather, Othar Turner.

Featured groups also will include Plena Libre, one of Puerto Rico's hottest salsa and Latin dance bands, and Vieux Farka Touré of Mali in West Africa, presenting desert blues.

The Lee Sexton Band from the Kentucky coalfields is to

and market quilts, lace, pottery, baskets, wood carvings and other handcrafted items.

The festival will include an ethnic food court to allow festival participants to sample foods from Africa, Greece, Germany, Thailand and other nations.

The Downtown booster group Venture Richmond has teamed up with the National Council for the Traditional Arts and the Richmond Folk Festival Programming Committee to present this event to celebrate the roots, richness and variety of American culture.

The national council brought its festival to Richmond in 2005, 2006 and 2007 on the promise Richmond would continue to host a similar event after the national event moved on. Butte, Mont., hosted the national festival this year.

However, Richmond organizers are promising to provide the same level of quality and authenticity that the national festival provided during its stay in the city.

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**4th Annual Belles & Beaus**  
Passport to Great DESTINATIONS

Mr. Beau Tyler Johnson  
Ms. Belle Ashley Threat  
Mr. Beau Nigel L. Williams

RICHMOND, VA – The Rho Eta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. held its 4th Annual Belles & Beaus Ball on June 6, 2008 at the Sheraton Park South Ballroom in Richmond, VA. An audience of over 200 family members and friends witnessed the 6, 7 and 8th graders blossom into society. The ball was the culminating event of an eight month program where nine Belles and seven Beaus were involved in a variety of educational, social and cultural activities through various workshops and seminars, and a cultural excursion to the Great Blacks in Wax Museum in Baltimore, Maryland. They also participated in service projects including: Caritas – feeding the homeless, Bon Secours Day of Dance, Fifth Baptist Church Daycare, and Rho Eta Omega Gospelfest 2008. The workshops included tips on communication, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, academic and career success, entrepreneurship and social graces.

The Belles & Beaus along with their parents/guardians were presented with assistance of the Master of Ceremony, Mr. John B. Gordon, III and the Meadowbrook High School Honor Guard. Dressed in pink evening gowns and platinum tuxedos, the Belles & Beaus waltzed to an instrumental classical selection followed by a jazzy dance. The Belles & Beaus charmed the onlookers with their special talent, energy, and poise with musical instrument solos, singing, and poetic readings. The evening concluded with the presentation of Mr. Personality, Beau Kevin F. Reid, II, Ms. Congeniality, Belle Breanna Hawkins, and the crown-

ing of Ms. Belle, Ashley Threat and Mr. Beaus, Tyler Johnson and Nigel L. Williams, for the highest solicitors of ads and patrons. Each participant received a trophy, watch/bracelet, souvenir journal, plaque and an extraordinary DVD of the Belles and Beaus Experience.

The 2007-2008 Belles and Beaus Participants were Rashad Baines, Tatyana Downing, Jazzmin Epps, FranKenya W. Green, Isis Haskins, Breanna Hawkins, Jhadir Hines, Lauren Lightfoot, Tyler Johnson, Kevin F. Reid II, Alana Thomas-Yates, Ashley Threat, Robert E. Valentine III, JaQuan Watson, Nigel Williams and Rosalyn Williams.

Rho Eta Omega Chapter will continue its tradition of helping reach the goals of this program in providing creative and cultural activities, improving communication and etiquette skills, increasing participation in community service, and helping to prepare sixth, seventh, and eighth graders for their futures beyond middle school. On behalf of Rho Eta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, President Sada Hill, along with the Co-Chairmen for this program, Ms. Lisa Walls and Mrs. Kasandra Blount-Green, we would like to thank the participants, parents, and the community for supporting our efforts. **Applications are now being accepted for 2008-2009 Belles & Beaus Program.** To receive an application, visit our website at [www.reoaka.org](http://www.reoaka.org) or via email at [bellesandbeaus@reoaka.org](mailto:bellesandbeaus@reoaka.org) or call (804)796-7992.

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