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BOYNTON BEACH'S HERITAGE CELEBRATION: A LOOK BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Boynton Beach - The Heart of Boynton (HOB) Community eagerly awaits the annual Boynton Beach Heritage Celebration, which will take place Friday, February 19 and Saturday, February 20th.

The Heritage Celebration, held in February to honor Black History month, was originally called Black Awareness Day. This annual event, which began as a small neighborhood gathering over three decades ago, and was spearheaded by the late Lillian Artis, the City's first black female commissioner. The objective was to address the feelings brought on by a community faced with turmoil. Black Awareness Day, a name which evolved into the Boynton Beach Heritage Celebration, was the launch towards uniting the Black community while striving to have their collective "voice" heard in the city. Today the event acknowledges the community's achievements through celebrating black culture and multicultural unity.

This year's event includes live entertainment from The New Horizon Band and various other genres of musical talents, such as R&B, pop and gospel. The program boasts performances by praise dancers, "spoken word" poets, motivational keynote speakers and much more. Children will be entertained with face painting, crafts, clowns, bounce houses and other exciting activities. Friday's activities are scheduled from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and will be held at the Ezell Hester Center 1901, Seacrest Blvd., followed by Saturday's day-long event from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., located on East Martin Luther King Blvd. In addition to music and laughter, the air will be filled with the aroma of ethnic foods from vendors ready to satisfy the palates of even the finickiest eaters!

The Boynton Beach Heritage Celebration, initially funded by the City of Boynton Beach's Parks and Recreation Department, is now totally funded by the Boynton Beach Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). This decision came in 2007, after the City's budget review, where the Commission voted all events would be re-directed from the City to the CRA.

Some of the free performances the CRA hosted at previous Heritage Celebration concerts include Kool and The Gang and The Commodores. These shows, combined with family fun activities, art in the park, and African tribute shows, encouraged over 5,000 attendees to visit the downtown Boynton Beach area.

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HOB Community President Gertrude Sullivan, who serves as Chair of the Heritage Celebration Committee, noted, “The goal of this year’s event is to increase awareness of Black heritage throughout the City and acknowledge the achievements that bind not just a certain race of people, but a community woven together by the common thread of love, pride and tradition with deep roots in cultural identity.”

The Boynton Beach CRA is committed to serving the community by guiding redevelopment activities and stimulating economic growth within its 1, 650 acre district. The agency focuses on creating a vibrant downtown core, providing affordable housing, and revitalizing neighborhoods. For more information on the CRA, its events and activities, call (561) 737-3256 or visit www.boyntonbeachcra.com