

News

STAGG STAGES FIRST BLACK HISTORY BEE

By **Roger Phillips**

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STOCKTON - Jessica Sanchez didn't hesitate. Asked to name the Civil War soldier who was the first black to receive the Medal of Honor from Congress, she calmly replied, "Sgt. William H. Carney," and victory was hers.

It was her 28th correct answer in 28 tries, and it earned Sanchez - a 16-year-old junior at Stagg High - the victory in the school's inaugural Black History Bee on Wednesday afternoon.

"I was up studying at 11 last night," Sanchez said. "I even studied today at lunch. My friends said I was going to psych myself out. But I never think there's enough studying."

The event was organized by Stockton-born author Terry a. O'Neal and held in the Stagg theater. A few hundred students hooted and hollered as about 50 of their classmates answered questions ranging from easy to excruciating. Musical entertainment was provided by the bongo drum of Jean Claude, a Stockton resident who hails from Cameroon.

The contest coincided with Black History Month and today's 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln. Four members of Stockton's black community asked the questions, including Mable "Jimi" Choice, who in 1963 became Stagg's first black teacher.

Stockton Unified Trustee Gloria Allen also asked some of the questions and said afterward, "It was so heartfelt for me to see children of all ethnicities getting excited about African-American history."

O'Neal said she saw "a great appreciation for African-American culture. Some of the kids said, 'I'm going to study this.'"

Tension mounted toward the end of the bee as the final three contestants rattled off one correct answer after another. Sanchez ultimately outlasted 10th-graders Claire Scheffer and Matthew Cordoza. She admitted she'd have been in trouble had she been asked to name the first U.S. black delegate to the United Nations (Edith Sampson).

"I was hoping that wouldn't come up," she said.

Sanchez said journalism is her favorite subject. Surprisingly, history has not been her strong suit. But preparing for the Black History Bee may have changed that.

"It helped me learn dates," Sanchez said. "I took this as a studying opportunity. Hopefully, this transfers to my history class."

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Sample questions

Here is a sampling of questions asked during Wednesday's Black History Bee:

In what year was the first Martin Luther King Day observed?

1986

In 1870, which state elected the first black to be seated as a representative in the U.S. Congress?

South Carolina

Which state was the first to abolish slavery?

Vermont

Who said, "I never run my train off the track and never lost a passenger"?

Harriet Tubman

Which person was born in Massachusetts, was the first black to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard and wrote "Souls of Black Folk"?

W.E.B. DuBois

At its height, what was the slave population in the U.S.?

About 1 million

Who was the first black woman to anchor the news at Nashville's WTVF-TV?

Oprah Winfrey

What did black American Richard B. Spikes invent?

Automatic car wash

Who was the first black person to place the American flag at the North Pole?

Matthew Henson

Who is called the "Father of Negro History"?

Dr. Carter G. Woodson