

News

HUNDREDS TURN OUT FOR BLACK FAMILY DAY

By **Scott Smith**
September 02, 2008
Record Staff Writer

STOCKTON - Aside from live music, craft booths and bounce houses, visitors to Stockton's 31st annual Black Family Day on Monday had a chance to come face to face with elite black writers of Northern California.

Among them, Terry A. O'Neal, Stockton native and 1991 Franklin High School graduate, greeted readers at a table covered with her books of fiction and poetry. She now lives in Sacramento with her husband and four children.

"My goal in life is to give back to our kids," she said. "I have kids of my own. I know how important it is to encourage and inspire them. For me, it's a passion."

Hundreds turned out for Monday's event at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza and Stockton Memorial Civic Auditorium in downtown Stockton. The day started with an early morning health walk. The volume rose in the afternoon as local bands took the stage.

O'Neal said she wanted to expose people to her books and give young readers a role model in the world of literacy rather than sports. The poet, author and screen writer has written "Sweet Lavender," "The Poet Speaks in Black" and "Motion Sickness."

Stockton's Tommie Muhammad, an organizer of Black Family Day, said the annual event has survived over the years out of a sense of pride Stockton's black community wants to share with its young people and those of other races.

"A lot of people in our community need to be reminded of the struggle and work African-Americans put into Stockton and San Joaquin County," he said, adding that this was a historic year with Democrat Barack Obama becoming the first black man to receive a major-party nomination for president.

First-time author Paulette Harper came to Stockton from her home in Richmond to share her book, "That Was Then This is Now," a spiritually uplifting book with lessons from her own life experiences of a broken marriage and disappointed dreams.

"I'm trying to bring some inspiration and hope," she said. "My book comes out of my own personal story and how God brought me through it."

Contact reporter Scott Smith at (209) 546-8296 or ssmith@recordnet.com.

[VISIT HIS BLOG](#)