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## 2016 MLK Events Begin



Getting together for a photo opportunity after the rally at Williston Middle School on Saturday morning (Jan. 16) are (from left) Pastor Charles Williams, Williston City Councilman Matt Brooks (a candidate for County Commission, District 5), Pastor Johnnie Jones III, Williston Mayor R. Gerald Hethcoat, Pastor Frederick Page, Pastor Willie Battles Jr., Levy County Assistant Superintendent of Schools Jeff Edison, and Pastor Reginald 'Reggie' Williams (who heralded his 61st birthday on Saturday). To see the entire story, other photos and a video, please visit the [COMMUNITY PAGE](#). While the Martin Luther King Day activities started in Williston, there are other events in the Tri-County Area on Monday, including in Bronson and Cross City. Unfortunately, like the organizers for the Williston event, those individuals and groups in Bronson and Cross City neglected sending any notice to *HardisonInk.com* for the public to know where and when to be on Monday. The best email to send information is [hardisonink@gmail.com](mailto:hardisonink@gmail.com).

*Photo by Jeff M. Hardison © Jan. 16, 2016 @ 11:37 p.m. All photos and videos originating from HardisonInk.com are protected by federal copyright law and may not be re-transmitted or published without prior written approval.*



**Honor Guard  
Members of the  
Williston High School  
unit of the Army Jr.  
Reserve Officer  
Training Corps stand  
ready to present the  
colors Saturday  
morning at Williston  
Middle School for the  
Martin Luther King  
Jr. Day Rally.**

*Photo by Jeff M. Hardison ©  
Jan. 18, 2015 @ 7:37 a.m.*

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## On The Campaign Trail



Williston City Councilman Matt Brooks stands next to his truck on Saturday (Jan. 17) outside of Williston Middle School after participating in the Martin Luther King Day Rally. Brooks is one of two candidates that has started a campaign to be elected Levy County Commission District 5. The other candidate who has announced his intent in that particular race is incumbent Danny Stevens.

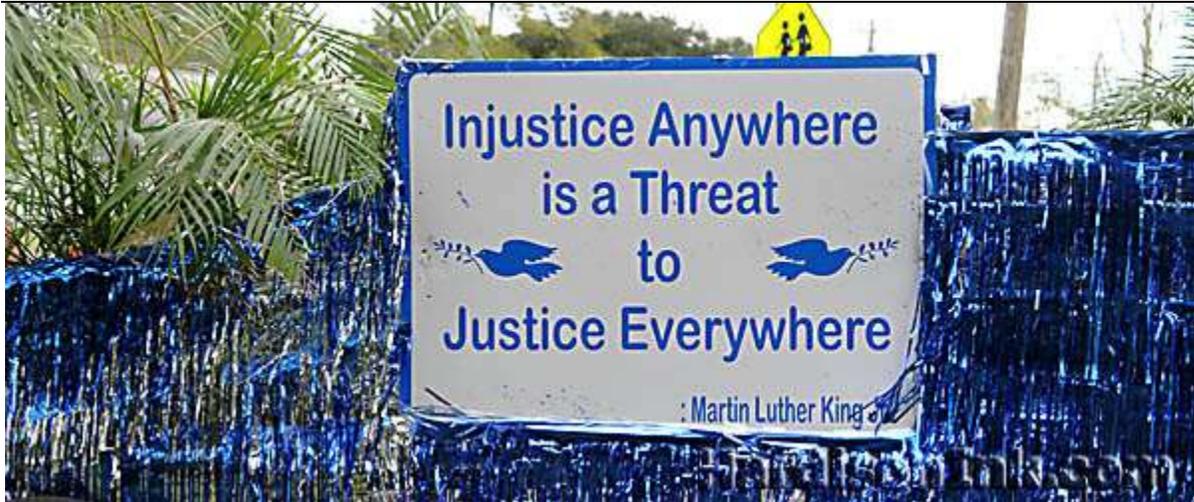
*Photo by Jeff M. Hardison © Jan. 17, 2015 @ 12:07 a.m.*

## And Justice For All



Williston Police Chief Dennis Strow is among the law enforcement officers helping with traffic during the parade to honor the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that was held in Williston on Saturday (Jan. 16). Dr. King was an excellent orator, and a great thinker and an outstanding Christian preacher, who sought to bring equality, peace, justice, brotherhood and love to the forefront during the civil rights movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

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This sign was among those on floats in the parade. The tag 'and justice for all,' is part of the *Pledge of Allegiance*, which includes the closing phrase 'with liberty and justice for all.' Photos by Jeff M. Hardison © Jan. 16, 2016 @ 11:57 p.m.

## MLK events start in Williston



**Story, Photos and Video By Jeff M. Hardison © Jan. 16, 2016 @ 11:37 p.m.**

**WILLISTON** -- What may be the biggest annual celebration of the life of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Levy County happened again on Saturday (Jan. 16), even though Martin Luther King Day is not until Monday.

Pastor Johnnie Jones III, president of the Williston Ministerial Faith Alliance, explained why the alliance chooses to celebrate on Saturday rather than Monday.

Larger communities in the area commemorate the occasion on Monday, he said.

He said the Saturday start can be a jumping-off point for a three-day weekend of service. While some people think of Monday as "a day off," Pastor Jones wants people to think of it as "a day on," a day when each person can do something positive in service of the church, or the family or someone else.

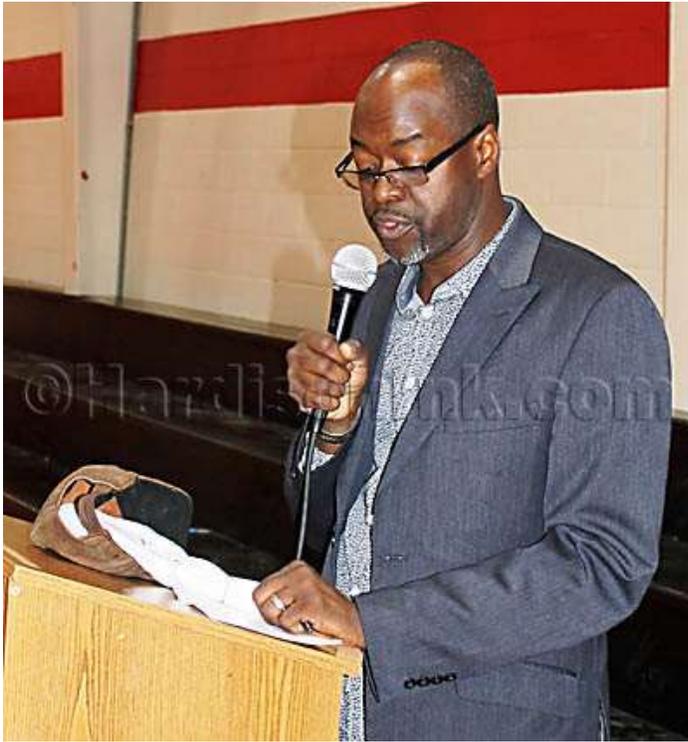
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Do something, he said, and think of it as sowing positive seeds for the future.

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## **Pastor Johnnie Jones III speaks to the people in Williston.**

Before the annual rally at Williston Middle School, there was a Martin Luther King parade from Williston City Hall to WMS. Members of the Williston Police Department, the Florida

Highway Patrol and the Levy County Sheriff's Office's voluntary Citizens on Patrol helped direct traffic. The officers with the law enforcement agencies had complete success. WPD Chief Dennis Strow was even among the people riding in the parade.

There were several floats and vehicles in the parade, including emergency vehicles from Williston Fire Rescue, Bronson Fire Rescue and Levy County Department of Public Safety.

There was even a car carrying some of the leaders of Williston's own AARP Chapter # 912.

Another organization that helps people had its presence noticed. The Levy County Prevention Coalition had a float and some of its riders were throwing candy to spectators, as did some of the riders on floats from the many churches involved with the parade.

Levy County Prevention Coalition Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Lewis enjoyed participating as he drove his 2015 Polaris 570 ATV to pull the small float. He was not alone from the LCPC.

While COO Lewis was the driver, or "wheel man," two board members rode on that float. Robert Wells, a founder of the LCPC, and Levy County Assistant Superintendent of Schools Jeff Edison were the riders.

After the floats and vehicles were parked, the rally began in the WMS Gymnasium.

There was a strong showing by the members of the Williston High School Army Jr. Reserve Officer Training Corps, including the WHS AJROTC Color Guard that presented the colors for the Pledge of Allegiance.



**An angel throws candy as a float goes down Noble Avenue (U.S. Alt. 27) in Williston on Saturday morning (Feb. 16).**

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Mimi Johnson led the audience in singing "We Shall Overcome."  
We shall overcome, we shall overcome,  
We shall overcome someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We shall overcome someday.



The Lord will see us through, The Lord will see us through,  
The Lord will see us through someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We shall overcome someday.



We're on to victory, we're on to victory,  
We're on to victory someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We're on to victory someday.

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Supporters of the campaign to nominate U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders as the Democratic candidate for President of the United States were at the event. From left, they are Barbara Byram, Dennis Wurst and Mary Lou Wurst. The two other contenders for the Democratic nomination are Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley and former United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. There are many Republican candidates seeking the nomination for President too.

We'll walk hand in hand, we'll walk hand in hand,  
We'll walk hand in hand someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We'll walk hand in hand someday.



Teri Edison, Jeff Edison, Sarah Edison and Jacob Edison stand next to the Levy County Prevention Coalition float. Jeff Edison, an assistant superintendent of schools in Levy County, is a member of the LCPC Board. He is also a candidate for Levy County superintendent of schools. The other candidate who has announced an intention to run in that race so far is Jerry Lawrence. Qualifying for county constitutional offices is in June.

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We are not afraid, we are not afraid,  
We are not afraid today;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We are not afraid today.



The WHS AJROTC Honor Guard presents the colors.



Some of the many WHS AJROTC cadets who were in attendance stand and listen. The students stood through the whole program.

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The truth shall make us free, the truth shall make us free,  
The truth shall make us free someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
The truth shall make us free someday.



**Williston Mayor R. Gerald Hethcoat (left) and Bronson Mayor Bruce Greenlee.**

We shall live in peace, we shall live in peace,  
We shall live in peace someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We shall live in peace someday.

Sharon Washington read some poetry.

Pastor Jones recognized the elected officials who were present. Williston Mayor R. Gerald Hethcoat, Williston City Councilman Matt Brooks, and Bronson Mayor Bruce Greenlee are the elected officials who were present.



**Williston City Councilman Matt Brooks speaks with the people in Williston as he urges everyone to keep moving forward.**

Jones also recognized Superintendent of Schools Jeff Edison and Williston City Council candidate Nancy Winger, who attended the event. And Pastor Jones introduced many of the other ministers who were present.

Pastor Jones said he is very thankful for the many pastors and members of different congregations who came to the rally.

Mayor Hethcoat, Mayor Greenlee, Councilman Brooks and Assistant Superintendent Edison shared their thoughts with the people at the rally.

Hethcoat said he had not prepared a speech. He said he is appreciative for the opportunity each year to celebrate Martin Luther King Day with the people of Williston.

The poetry read by Washington, Hethcoat said, made him think about hope. It is up to every single individual human being,

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Hethcoat said, and not just the elected officials and the pastors, to give hope to family members and neighbors.

“If we all give hope to each other,” Hethcoat said, “we will give hope to our nation. That’s what we need to do folks.”

The mayor said he believes the Williston Ministerial Faith Alliance is an outstanding group of pastors. Whenever he has needed anything, the group has responded positively, he said. Mayor Hethcoat reminded the pastors that if they need him to help in any way, all they have to do is call.

Bronson Mayor Greenlee said he too came unprepared to speak. However, he knows that he must share with the people that he gives his thanks to the Lord for the legacy of Dr. King.

Without that legacy and without God by his side, Mayor Greenlee said he would not be at that podium. Greenlee said he thanks God for all of the blessings He bestows on him.

Greenlee urged listeners to keep the faith, and never surrender the hope they have in their hearts. Despite what may seem insurmountable, keep the faith and hope, he said.

Greenlee said he hopes children see him and that his actions reflect for the children to see that with trust in God, anything is possible.



**Williston City Council candidate Nancy Winger was among the people present for the rally at Williston Middle School on Saturday (Feb. 16) . Robert Mack is the other candidate who has qualified for the election to the City Council seat currently occupied by Williston City Councilman Jason Cason.**

When Councilman Brooks took the microphone, he told the audience that this gym reminded him of years ago when he was with a group called “Teens On The Move,” and Coach Danny Floyd led them. Coach Floyd still leads that group today.

Brooks then quoted Dr. King, who said “If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.”

Brooks said this speaks to all people. He added to the thought.

“We have to keep moving forward in love for one another,” Brooks said. “We have to move forward in unity with one another. And you have to keep moving forward.”

When Edison spoke, he said he wants to help children achieve their dream. To accomplish this, Edison said he believes everyone needs to work together.

He also encourages all people to stand up in support of their children each and every day.

Near the end of the program, Pastor Jones spoke about a bright future.

Jones said that there will be a time when all of the pastors of all of the churches can be together to take the rightful place as members of the family of faith of The Good News.

He said this annual celebration is about the community coming together as whole, not as one church being dominant over another.

“It’s about us supporting each other,” he said, “and it’s about us all working together.”

There was a banquet on Saturday night. Proceeds from the banquet are the major funding source for scholarships, which the Williston Ministerial Faith Alliance has presented for the past 15 years, Jones said.

In closing, Pastor Jones said that he anticipates the annual celebration in Williston for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s legacy to be much bigger next year.