

Event designed to unite residents

By Doreen Dennis, Messenger Staff Writer, ddennis@the-messenger.com

Light of Chance Inc. will host its fifth annual "Aspire Weekend" in Madisonville from Friday through Sunday.

Aspire Weekend is a revitalization event sponsored by the city of Madisonville and Carhartt Inc., that will kick off with a family-friendly cookout from 4 to 8 p.m. Friday at the Dr. Festus Clayborn Park.

This weekend's event is aimed at empowering and uniting people of the community from different economic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. It consists of a youth summit workshop, comedy show and concludes with a gospel explosion on Sunday.

"Everyone is invited to the cookout to enjoy free food, games and music during this Friday's community gathering, for an old-fashioned fun time," said Light of Chance founder and director Eric Logan.

A teen summit will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday with registration for middle and high school youths at Browning Springs Middle School. Pre-registration can be accessed online before Saturday at lightofchance.org.

Some of this year's workshop curriculum will include topics on sex and healthy relationships, influence of media and pop culture, and college preparation and life. A host of mentors and volunteers will advise and assist the facilitator for each workshop. Optional sessions in music and spoken word, improv and photography, and dance and stepping are also tied into the day's interactive summit.

"Our interactive workshops support topics that are pertinent to what is happening in the teens' lives today. The workshops won't be like school at all," Logan said.

He explained that the youths had 100 percent say in what they wanted to hear and learn during the summit, which adds to participation and interest.

Mentors will also be matched with kids so they can have a support system throughout the year. At the end of the sessions, teens can present questions in an open panel discussion/forum, or may submit questions anonymously.

"Our work through Aspire helps the teens to construct their goals and reach their dreams in preparing for life," he said.

Logan, a 1998 graduate of Madisonville-North Hopkins High School, is currently a communications instructor at Bowling Green Technical College. He came up with the idea of his organization in 2005 through a conversation with a friend, a gentleman who watched him grow up in Madisonville.

"There are more positive people in Madisonville who were a great influence and inspiration to me when I was a youth — I just want to give back," said Logan.

Aspirations haven't faded for Logan, as he next plans to study for a doctorate in organizational leadership.

"It's bigger than me and more about the future of teens who will soon be adults," Logan said, speaking about the growth and expansion of the Light of Chance organization during the past five years.

He said Saturday night's comedy show will be a good, clean show for the entire family, and the gospel explosion planned for Sunday is a nondenominational program focused on praise and worship.

Tickets for the 7 p.m. Saturday comedy show at Byrnes Auditorium on the Madisonville Community College health campus are \$7 in advance and \$10 at the door. Renard Hirsch, who has been featured on BET and the World Famous Laugh Factory and Zanies comedy clubs, will host the show. Comedians Flash Flood, Mike James and Brian "B-Cov" Covington are featured. Advance tickets can be obtained through lightofchance.org, Owensboro Credit Union or Jigga's Place.

Gospel explosion will begin at 3 p.m. Sunday at Oak Grove Baptist Church in Madisonville, opening with words from the Rev. David Kelso and followed by musical performances of The Sons of Jacob of Hopkinsville, Unity of Campbellsville and New Generation of Praise of Hopkinsville.