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## Diversity Focus Partners with Local Organizations to create LENS Student Leadership Series

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**Cedar Rapids, Iowa – February 23, 2012** – Diversity Focus is expanding its youth programming initiative to include multiple leadership events under a new brand called “LENS.” **LENS Student Leadership Series** is a collaboration between Diversity Focus and local organizations to promote after-school and summer programs for high school students in Iowa’s Creative Corridor. The goal of the series is to eliminate the achievement gap of our future leaders by sharing experiences, knowledge, and developing leadership skills.

“We are excited to partner with the Mayor’s Youth Empowerment Program (MYEP) of Iowa City, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (AKA) of Eastern Iowa and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) of Cedar Rapids, to expand our student leadership program,” says Chad Simmons, Interim Executive Director of Diversity Focus. “We will continue to announce additional partners and events throughout the year.”

The first event is the **FasTrac Civil Rights Tour**, on March 10-18, 2012. The tour is open to all high school students in Iowa’s Creative Corridor. The bus tour leaves from Iowa City, traveling to Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. Students will learn about the civil rights movement by visiting various historical museums, churches, and colleges that honor civil rights’ leaders.

“This tour helps build student’s confidence by learning from the past and planning for their future,” proclaims FasTrac organizer Henri Harper.

FasTrac, a MYEP initiative, is a support program for high school students to assist with their academic performance, community involvement, social growth, identity, and preparation for college. For more information, visit <http://www.fastracprogram.org> or contact Henri Harper at [h.harper@myep.us](mailto:h.harper@myep.us).

The second event is the **Coretta Scott King Scholarship Luncheon** on April 28, 2012 at the University of Iowa Athletics Hall of Fame in Iowa City from 11:30am-1:30pm. The luncheon is hosted by the Tau Psi Omega Alumnae Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., (AKA). The luncheon celebrates Mrs. King’s lifetime achievements and her legacy as an extraordinary woman. The event will also acknowledge the next generation of leaders and will raise money to fund an annual scholarship.

“Tau Psi Omega chapter is grateful to be partnering with Diversity Focus to put on our event,” says Tenika Johnson, event chairperson. “Our hope is that we empower youth and all women throughout the Creative Corridor. ”

Alpha Kappa Alpha was the first historically African American sorority founded at Howard University in 1908. Tau Psi Omega Alumnae Chapter was chartered in Iowa City in 1993. Alpha Kappa Alpha’s mission is to cultivate and encourage high scholastic and ethical standards, to promote unity and friendship among college women, to study and help alleviate problems concerning girls and women in order to improve their social stature, to maintain a progressive interest in college life, and to be of “Service to All Mankind.” For more information contact Tenika Johnson at [tjohn315@hotmail.com](mailto:tjohn315@hotmail.com).

The third event is the **NAACP Youth Empowerment Luncheon** on May 19, 2012 from 11:30am - 1:30pm, at the Clarion Hotel & Convention Center, Cedar Rapids. The NAACP Youth Empowerment Luncheon was created to recognize the accomplishments of graduating African-American high school students.

"We need to highlight the success we are having in the community," says Davena Johnson, Cedar Rapids public school educator and NAACP member. "I want them to know that we care about them and their future."

Diversity Focus will sponsor, SHIFT Speaker, Azure Antoinette. Azure is a world class spoken word artist/poet, youth advocate and a dynamic speaker.

NAACP is a non-profit organization that has a vision to ensure a society in which all individuals have equal rights and there is no racial hatred or discrimination. For more information contact Davena Johnson at [DaJohnson@cr.k12.ia.us](mailto:DaJohnson@cr.k12.ia.us).

Continuing on May 19, 2012, from 2:00pm - 4:00pm, Diversity Focus will introduce its debut event, the **Student Leadership Conference-Unplugged**, at the Clarion Hotel & Convention Center, Cedar Rapids. The **Student Leadership Conference-Unplugged** is specifically designed for past participants of Diversity Focus' Student Leadership Conferences. The two hour session will be an intimate dialogue with 2011 conference workshop facilitator, Azure Antoinette. The students will examine and discuss issues surrounding the struggles and achievements of youth today. Antoinette has spoken at youth events and conferences around the country, using spoken word poetry to influence youth to be themselves and to create change in their communities. Limited space is available for additional high school students. For more information contact Zorana Wortham-White at [zwortham-white@diversityfocus.org](mailto:zwortham-white@diversityfocus.org).

"Azure had such an impact on the students this past October, we just had to bring her back," says Diversity Focus Program Director, Zorana Wortham-White.

View all events and register at [www.diversityfocus.org/student](http://www.diversityfocus.org/student)

Diversity Focus was established in 2005 as a non-profit organization devoted to enhancing the diversity of the Cedar Rapids - Iowa City corridor.

**Diversity Focus Vision:**

Diversity is the crucial link to economic, cultural, academic, and technological success. Diversity Focus' vision is that the Corridor community be the model of inclusion that values, nurtures, attracts, and retains people of diverse backgrounds, cultures and beliefs.

For more information about Diversity Focus, please visit [www.diversityfocus.org](http://www.diversityfocus.org).

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