



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Antoine M. Thompson

## Senator Thompson Announces \$25,000 For Juneteenth Of Buffalo

ANTOINE M THOMPSON June 8, 2009

**Buffalo, NY-** Yesterday, Sunday, June 7, 2009, NYS Senator Antoine M. Thompson (D-Parts of Erie & Niagara Counties) announced \$25,000 in funding that will go to the Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo. This funding will be used to keep the annual festival alive for years to come. The press conference took place at William Emslie YMCA at 585 William Street in Buffalo at 9:30 AM.

"I am proud to be able to contribute to this historic festival and provide future generations the ability to appreciate it in the way that we have for years. This funding will help to preserve and promote the Juneteenth Festival," stated Senator Thompson.

The Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo was started in 1976 by B.U.I.L.D., a community-based organization. The festival was originally held on Jefferson Avenue and soon outgrew the street and was moved to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. The mission of Juneteenth of Buffalo, Inc. is to actively preserve and promote the broad spectrum of African American heritage through educational and cultural activities. The Buffalo festival is the third largest in the country.

The Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo is an important component of summertime events in the Buffalo-Niagara region and exists solely for charitable and educational purposes. On June 19, 1865, the Union soldiers traveled to Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were free. Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States. It is a pride-filled day of reflection and renewal, a moment in time taken to appreciate the African American heritage. This festival is inclusive of all races, ethnicities and nationalities. On this day, honor and respect is paid for the sufferings of slavery, it is a day of prayer for peace and liberty for all.

Senator Thompson started off the event by shooting the gun to start the 5K kickoff marathon. The press conference and check presentation were held immediately following the start of the marathon.

"The Juneteenth Festival is very special to Buffalo. People come from all areas to experience our festival and we need to make sure that the tradition is carried out and never forgotten," said Senator Thompson.

"Under today's economic conditions we were seriously thinking about cutting the size of the festival or not having it at all," said Marcus Brown, President of the Juneteenth Board of Directors. "We are very appreciative of this gift from Senator Thompson. This funding offers us an opportunity to celebrate all year long."