Written by Mehgaan Jones
Tuesday, 24 February 2009 19:02

Many bridges of hope and admiration were built at Cityview Performing Arts Magnet School on February 18 and 19.

The Minneapolis School District and Twin Cities Black Employment Network (TC-BEN) have partnered to present the first annual 100 Strong Who Care: Building Bridges for the Next Generation.

The event was the brainchild of James Burroughs, Director of Diversity and Equal Opportunity for the Minneapolis School District and TC-BEN in an effort to develop a community project that would bring together African American professionals to inspire our future leaders.

“We are calling the volunteers inspirational models, not role models. We want to show the youth examples of leaders who look like them,” said Burroughs.

Burroughs explained that a leader who he was able to identify with as a child inspired him to become a lawyer. He believes the volunteers will inspire and give hope to the children.

The event generated a buzz larger than expected. “The event is getting a lot of attention by the

media and surrounding community. Right now we have 88 volunteers and our goal is to reach 100," said Burroughs prior to February 18.

The well anticipated event will included reading sessions and a career day. Grades K-8 also participated in the activities with the younger school children reading Black history stories with various community leaders and spending time with African American leaders who care about their future.

The older children, grades 5th –8th, participated in an informal career day. They participated in small group activities where they were introduced to careers in marketing, law, science, human resources, computer technology and many other professions.

MPS and TC-BEN hope to create a series of 100 strong which will include events for Asian, Native American, Hispanic and other ethnic groups.

"Our ultimate goal is to get volunteers to continue working with the youth in the future," said Burroughs. The event coordinators are more than willing to assist with mentoring opportunities for volunteers.