

Our Town

City honors memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

By **KAITLYN NAPLES**
STAFF WRITER

Despite the frigid temperatures on an early Monday morning, over 100 individuals attended the Martin Luther King Jr. celebration to honor a man who had a dream.

"People working together," was the theme at the Bristol branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or NAACP's annual Martin Luther King Jr. breakfast.

"He was an inspiration to many of us," State Representative Whit Betts (R-Bristol, Plymouth) said. "He shared the common goal of everyone working together."

Much emphasis was put on voting, and encouraging individuals to register to vote and use the ability they have to vote.

"If Martin Luther King Jr. were here today, he would be impressed with the turnout (at the breakfast) and would also find some hope in being optimistic," State Senator Eric Coleman (D-Hartford, Bloomfield, Windsor) said at the breakfast last week. Coleman added that King would be "dismayed" by the segregation, gridlock in Congress, social conditions, violence and use of drugs that is prevalent in our society. However, Coleman said he thinks King's "greater concern would be if we decided not to participate, decided not to vote or register to vote," and exercise our rights.

Martin Luther King Jr., born on Jan. 15, 1929, is



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State Senator Eric Coleman was the guest speaker at the Martin Luther King Jr. celebration, and encouraged individuals to remember to exercise their rights to vote. He also recalled when he heard the news about the assassination of King, who was shot at the age of 39.

probably best known for his "I Have a Dream" speech and his vision of a "color-blind society."

"His dream was for us to judge people on the content of their character, rather than on the color of their skin," Coleman said.

King, 39 at the time, was assassinated on April 4, 1968 by James Earl Ray, an act that silenced his advocacy forever.

"It is amazing to me the phenomenal amount this man had accomplished in his 39 years," Coleman said as he listed what King was most known for, including the Memphis sanitation worker strike, forming the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and much more.

Coleman also spoke on the fact that the nation had elected its first African American president, "which some say 'We have arrived,' yet others say the election and treatment of President (Barack) Obama exposes the fact that we still have a



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Members of the Beulah A.M.E. Zion Church perform a musical number at the Martin Luther King Jr. celebration at Bristol Eastern High School last Monday.

long way to go in terms of tolerance and racial attitudes," he said.

"In order to achieve this colorblind society, it's going to require some continued effort," Coleman said.

Lexie Mangum, president of the Bristol branch of

the NAACP, also encouraged individuals to register to vote and practice their rights to have a say.

"We have a right to vote, that vote did not come easy," Mangum said, adding that individuals shouldn't complain about policies or

politicians if they don't vote for anything.

Last August, a new monument in honor of Martin Luther King Jr., "The Stone of Hope," was opened to the public in Washington, D.C.

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