

BSU holds annual Sickle Cell Auction to raise awareness for disease

X Talent shows brings in more than \$1,200 in donations

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TY ADAMS
STAFF WRITER

A lively crowd and live performances weren't the only reasons why students and community members attended the Black Student Union's (BSU) sickle cell auction on Sunday.

When the audience was asked how many people knew someone with sickle cell anemia, just about every hand went up.

BSU held its annual Sickle Cell Auction on Sunday in the Student Union Theater. Every year, BSU holds the auction to not only raise awareness for sickle cell anemia, but to also raise as much money as it can for the cause. Altogether, BSU raised \$1,242.48 in donations, slightly less than last year's total of more than \$1,400. All proceeds went to Women & Children's Hospital of Buffalo.

Attendees paid a \$5 fee to see many different performances, with acts from all over Buffalo coming to perform. After each performance, attendees could donate a respective amount of money depending on how much they liked the performance.

Sickle cell anemia is an inherited blood disorder that has a heavy prevalence in the black community. One in every 12 African Americans has the sickle cell trait, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In a normal and healthy body, hemoglobin in red blood cells will absorb oxygen in efforts to maintain the healthiness of the cells. Normal hemoglobin cells are doughnut-shaped to allow free movement through small and large blood vessels to deliver oxygen.

Sickle hemoglobin is shaped differently – sort of like microscopic bananas. The sickle shape causes blood blockage and intense pain.

For some families, the sickness brings tragedy.

"My sister passed away from sickle cell at age 8," said Stephen Parker, a pastor and UB Stampede bus driver.

For others with the sickness themselves, it's a constant, daily struggle.

"I'm always in and out of the hospital – actually I just got out of the hospital this past week," said Daywon Jackson, one of the hosts of the auction and a SUNY Buffalo State student.

Jackson said the typical life spans of those with sickle cell anemia are lower than normal people – about the mid-40s. He said his childhood friend died of sickle cell at the age of 26.

Jackson said he feels like he is aging quicker than he should be and that it takes a lot of energy for him to do simple physical tasks.

He educated the audience on certain things about sickle cell and pleaded the audience to not to take it lightly.

"Please go and get tested for the sickle cell trait. You may not know that you have it," Jackson said.

The auction began with Lisa LaTrovato, a UB graduate and senior development associate at Women & Children's Hospital, congratulating BSU for hosting the event.

"This really makes a difference," LaTrovato said.

LaTrovato also reiterated the strain that sickle cell takes on not just the victim, but the victim's family as well.

"Yes, kids come to get treatment, but mom and dad can't go to work," she said.

LaTrovato awarded BSU with a plaque entitled "Aliya" in honor the sickle cell auction helping children like her.

The event proceeded with numerous different performances, showcasing all different kinds of talent.

The show had a "106 & Park" theme from BET's hit hip-hop and R&B music video show.

"'The 106 and Park' theme allowed different organizations to bring an array of different talents to the stage. The hosts brought their personalities similar to the hosts of '106 and Park,'" said Deidree Golbourne, BSU vice president and a junior African-American studies major.

The most popular acts brought in the best donations.

The Caribbean Student Association's Crossfyah dance team performed a dance medley incorporating musical and dance elements from Caribbean, Africa and Latino countries. It brought in \$135 in donations.

UB's gospel choir sang a powerful version of "He's Able" in honor of expressing what many felt God could do for them, especially during crises like sickle cell.

The entire act brought in \$224 in donations.

Diane Deroche, senior health and human services major, said the community aspect of the show was the most satisfying.

"We hope that more awareness is brought to a disease that is commonly overlooked," Golbourne said. "We want to make sure people are getting tested for the disease or trait, they know about the complexities of the disease, they know what steps they can take when helping someone who has the disease, or can spread the word on a disease that affects us so dearly."

email: features@ubspectrum.com

ANGELA BARACA,
THE SPECTRUM

Kayshawn Macharie sings during BSU's annual Sickle Cell Auction Sunday, which aims to help raise awareness and donations for the disease.

