

B

SECTION

AUTO REVIEW



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**B3**

DATEBOOK

DECEMBER 14

After Midnight at The Greenwich. Enjoy a live video taping for the upcoming Channel 38 program "After Midnight"; highlighting a variety of musicians and artists from around the region. The Greenwich.

DECEMBER 15

Get into the Christmas Spirit the old-fashioned way by making your very own Christmas craft. William Howard Taft National Historic Site. Time 12 p.m.

My Nose Turns Red Theatre Co presents: The New Millennium Youth Circus Holiday Extravaganza. Forty area children ages 6-18 perform amazing feats and comic routines celebrating the art of the theatrical clown. Time 2 p.m. Aronoff.

DECEMBER 19

"Rhetoric". Spoken word exhibition features open mic sessions and musical guests. Time 8 p.m. The Greenwich.

Blue Wisp Big Band. Time 8:30 p.m. Blue Wisp Jazz Club.

FRISCH'S THE NUTCRACKER. Tchaikovsky's dazzling score sets the scene for a fairytale adventure starring Marie and her beloved Nutcracker doll turned Prince. Keep an eye out for magicians, dancing rats, living dolls, and of course, sugar plum fairies! Aronoff. Through Dec 29.

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CLASSIFIED

Need a job?  
Take a look.

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BRINGS THE ENCHANTMENT OF AFRICA TO CINCINNATI



The banquet hall at Jungle Jim's complex in Fairfield was set for a chief, His Royal Highness Charles Mbah, Igwe of Nigeria, for the NuWay Foundation gala.

By Dan Yount  
The Cincinnati Herald

Cincinnati mingled with royalty and villagers from far-off Nigeria during an enchanted evening hosted by locally-based NuWay Foundation to raise money to help the people of the village of Awa in that country own small businesses and develop medical, water, and other community services.

Awa village Chief Charles Mbah, Igwe called the Bianu or coming together event, "The greatest day in my life." He said he was elated and happy to attend the event. "Thank you, America, for your contributions and in the other ways you make these things possible for our village," he said.

At the foundations' Bianu/A Coming Together gala, the magic was in the air at the Oscar Banquet Hall at the Jungle Jim's complex in Fairfield Nov. 30 as relatives, friends and acquaintances from the two countries, many in colorful African dress, enjoyed African music and dance while they dined on Nigerian stew of chicken and

Photos by Gregg Smith and Dan Yount



These Cincinnatians attending the NuWay Foundation gala have been in Awa, Nigeria, to work on a water project. From left, are Ian McCullough, Matt and Lisa Taulbee, Bobbie and Larry McCullough. The McCulloughs said they like volunteering with NuWay because they can really see the fruits of their work in Nigeria.

beef, Chin Chin seasoned dough, SuYa meat garnished with peanuts and spices, fried plantain and orange coconut cake.

The dinner started with the traditional cola nut ceremony, in which the oldest person seated at the table divided a chewy, but bitter, cola nut from southeastern Nigeria for the table to share as a gesture of welcome.

The event, the second of its kind, was the NuWay Foundation's annual fundraiser to help the people of Awa.

Also, as part of the evening, Robert "Chip" Harrod, executive director of BRIDGES for a Just Community, was awarded the foundation's 2007 International Bridge Award for his commitment to justice, equality and building strong relationships



NuWay Foundation Board Chair Evans Nwankwo, at left, presents the foundation's 2007 International Bridge Award to Robert "Chip" Harrod of BRIDGES for a Just Community. At right is Cathy Nwankwo.



His Royal Highness Charles Mbah, Igwe (Chief) of Awa village, Nigeria, addresses the crowd at the NuWay Foundation gala.



A Nigerian dancer from Awa village performs in a high-energy dance performance at the NuWay Foundation Gala.

among people. Harrod was originator and founding president of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

Founded in 2006 by Evans and Cathy Nwankwo, NuWay Foundation seeks to transform the lives and economic conditions of the less fortunate through education, community building, and economic development. In its first year, NuWay focused its efforts in Awa, installing four fresh water pumps, providing school supplies and funding five additional schoolteachers for the village.

Evans Nwankwo is NuWay, continued on page B2



"Jungle Jim" (James Bonaminio) worked behind the scenes to make the NuWay Foundation gala a success at his complex in Fairfield.

Evans Nwankwo's mother, Margaret Nwankwo, at right, and an aunt, B. M. Nwankwo, at left, and Chief Larry Ozah, of Atlanta, were present for the NuWay Foundation gala.



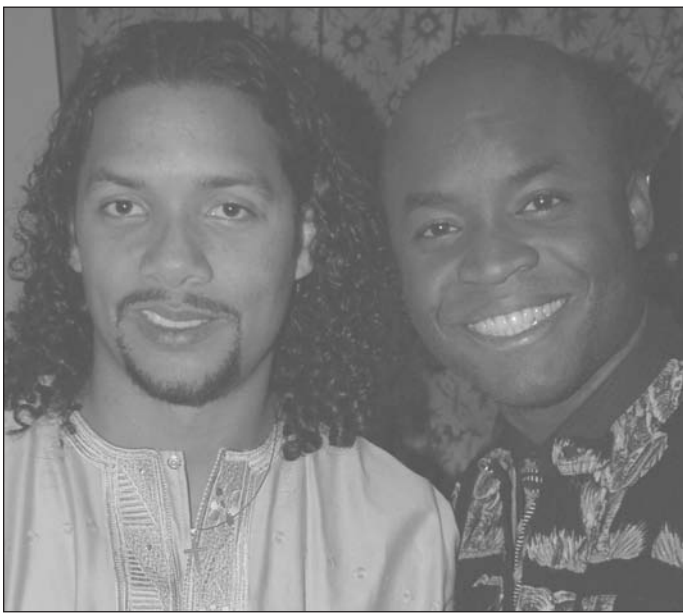


Event Emcees Cammy Dierking, anchor for WKRC Local 12, and Wayne "Box" Miller, host of the Prime Time Sports Show on WDBZ-1230 "The Buzz," (both on the left) are shown with NuWay Foundation Board Chair Evans Nwankwo and Cathy Nwankwo at the foundation gala.

founder, president and CEO of Megan Construction Co. of Cincinnati, which built the Freedom Center.

According to information provided by Nwankwo's brother, Hezekiah Nwankwo, and other Nigerians attending the banquet, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has a population of 135 million people, who live in poverty as they share a country the size of Texas and Oklahoma combined. It is the most populous country in Africa and the ninth most popular country in the world.

Although the country has vast oil wealth, the average worker makes about \$2 per day. Only 20 percent of the population has safe, clean water. Six percent are infected with HIV, and 1.8 million people have AIDS. Health care is lacking, with one in five children dying before the age of 6. The average life expectancy is about 43 years.



Three of NuWay Foundation Board Chair Evans Nwankwo's sisters, now living in Atlanta, attended the foundation gala in Fairfield. They are, from left, Ngozi Nwankwo, Joy Nwankwo, and Kate Okpukpara. Their professions are respectively pharmacist, lawyer and nurse.

for a villager to establish a small business by using his or her talents or by purchasing equipment, he said. A \$300 donation provided a villager enough money to purchase a corn grinder so residents do not have to walk for hours to another village to gird their corn. He and Cathy are now working to establish a medical clinic in the village.

"We want to concentrate the foundation's focus in helping people with their education," Nwankwo said, referring to how his mother, Margaret Nwankwo, who attended the event, emphasized the importance of an education to him. "We want to give people the opportunity to fend for themselves. This is not a handout."

A long-term goal is to establish a base for people to come and stay in Nigeria while on mission work there, he said.

He said the foundation also provides opportunities for relationship building with the

This West African country is a federal constitutional republic modeled after the United States government comprising thirty-six states and one Federal Capital Territory, where the capital city of Abuja is located.

The people of Nigeria have an extensive history, and archaeological evidence shows that human habitation of the area dates back to at least 9000 BC. The Benue-Cross River area is thought to be the original homeland of the Bantu migrants who spread across most of central and southern Africa in waves between the 1st millennium BC and the 2nd millennium AD.

The current president of Nigeria is Umaru Musa Yar'Adua who was elected in 2007.

Ethnocentrism, tribalism, sectarianism (especially religious) have played a visible role in Nigerian politics both prior and subsequent to independence in 1960. Many members of the Nwankwo family have immigrated to the United States following civil unrest in the 1990s. Some said they are anxious to return to the homeland.

Evans Nwankwo said the foundation supports the start up of micro businesses in Awa. Just \$1,200 provides the capital necessary



Two women from Nigeria, Ashlee Carlisle and Randa Fiador, attended the NuWay Foundation gala.

people of two different countries.

He noted it is important to give to help people in one's own country, but small amounts of money go a long way in Nigeria. Also, he has discovered that people who go to other countries to help people there, come back inspired to do the same in their own country.

For more information about NuWay Foundation or to make a donation, visit the organization's Website at [www.nuwayfoundation.org](http://www.nuwayfoundation.org).

## Hyman lives in *Strength of a Woman*

By Kim Tolley  
Herald Contributor

When Phyllis Hyman first appeared on the national music scene more than 30 years ago, fans were taken by the singer's exuberance on songs such as Betcha By Golly Wow and You Know How To Love Me.

With her vocal talent, humor and supermodel looks, music industry observers figured it was just a matter of time before Hyman became a superstar. But through the next two decades, Hyman's early exuberance gradually gave way to songs and interviews expressing pain and loneliness. By the time she committed suicide a week before her 46th birthday, Hyman, who had been diagnosed as bipolar a decade earlier and ballooned up to nearly 300 pounds, made it clear to family and friends that she was overwhelmed by her addictions to alcohol, drugs and food.

As her biographer Jason A. Michael recounts in the new book, "Strength of a Woman," Hyman was also frustrated by her stalled career and the success of what she considered lesser singers.

"Her insecurity came out as intense agitation," Michael explained during a recent interview. "When she was up, she was critical of the singers who were less talented but received greater recognition. When down, she couldn't understand why people would want to see her."

Hyman's insecurities also led her to sabotage any opportunities that would have brought her a bigger audience and mainstream recognition. One major break was the role of blues singer Shug Avery in the film, *The Color Purple*. Although Hyman initially wowed the film's casting director, she "acted out" during the first cast meeting with Steven Spielberg, Whoopi Goldberg, Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover. The role eventually went to Margaret Avery, an actress whose singing had to be dubbed by performer Tata Vega.

"She would have been an amazing Shug Avery," Michael said. "But she was terrified of letting her guard down so she sabotaged herself in both her career and personal life."

Michael, who was working for singer Betty Wright in Miami, knew there was a story as he observed Wright's reaction to news of Hyman's suicide.

"Betty was devastated but not surprised," he recalled.

Michael started working in earnest on Hyman's story in 2002 but encountered numerous obstacles as he approached various publishing houses. Although editors loved the book, Michael and his agents encountered resistance as they moved up the publishing chain. Predicting poor sales, staff in the publishing houses' sales departments argued that Hyman either wasn't well known or had been forgotten after her death. So the Detroit based writer finally took matters into his own hands



Phyllis Hyman

and founded his own publishing company, JAM Books.

"It was a struggle writing the book," he said. "I had some lean years and ended up filing for bankruptcy. But I'm very happy with the finished project. This was a labor of love."

After butting heads with Hyman's longtime manager Glenda Gracia, Michael and his book received Gracia's blessing.

"She is very protective of Phyllis," Michael explained. "It took a minute for us to get on the same page but eventually, she realized that my intentions were honorable."

As he reconstructed the details of his subject's life, Michael talked to Hyman's family and friends who were blunt in their recollections of the singer's problems and complex personality.

"Phyllis always put it out there in interviews so most folks were candid from jump," Michael said. "They didn't sugarcoat it."

Raised by a mother who suffered from chronic depression and alcoholic father in Pittsburgh, Hyman's emotional turmoil started early. Her troubled relationship with her mother lasted until the older woman's death in 1993. In addition, several of Hyman's siblings would also suffer from depression and substance abuse.

"I think it was always a strained relationship with her mother," said Michael. "As a child, she was verbally abusive to her mother after watching her father verbally abuse his wife. I think she felt enormous guilt over that. The parents' issues affected all of the children. Communication was not always easy among them."

Michael believes that Hyman's addictions to drugs, alcohol and food were worsened by her career in the entertainment industry.

"Performing in nightclubs where she was surrounded by alcohol probably exacerbated the problem," he stated. "Her weight was always an issue. She couldn't cook on the road so coming off stage, she'd eat and go to bed exhausted."

The Detroit native, who was diagnosed as bipolar while writing his book, believes he has an affinity with Hyman.

"When I first listened to the *Living All Alone* album, I felt really connected," he said. "Having suffered depression, I spoke that language."

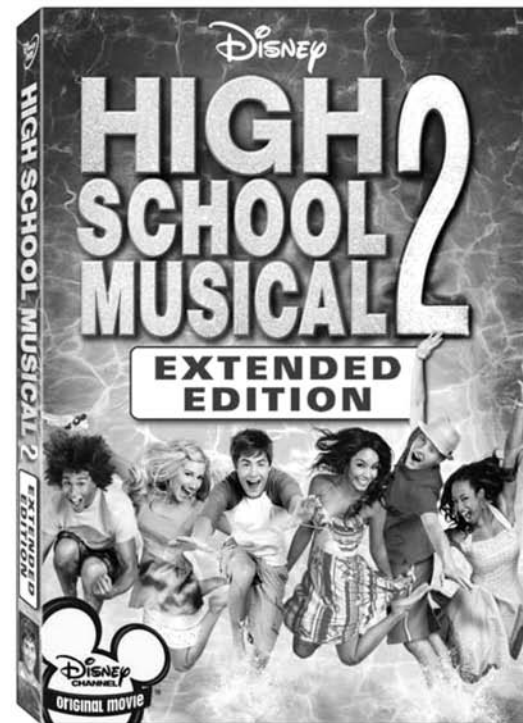
Despite Michael's difficulties in finding a publisher for his book, Hyman continues to have a loyal group of fans long after her death. "I think the book helps the reader see inside themselves and their struggles," he said. "The moral of Phyllis' story could be, take care of your issues before your issues take care of you."

For more information about Phyllis Hyman and "Strength of a Woman," visit [www.phyllishymanstory.com](http://www.phyllishymanstory.com).

We're online at [www.cincinnatiherald.com](http://www.cincinnatiherald.com)

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