

‘Give of yourself, your smile’

Winans excited to perform at concert benefiting youth of McCracken County

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All Earlie Fugate had to do was ask.

That’s how Paducah landed a tour date from the “hardest working woman in gospel music” Vickie Winans on Friday night at the Luther F. Carson Four Rivers Center. Performance time is 7:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$20 to \$40 and are available by phoning 450-4444 or online at www.thecarsoncenter.org.

In 2004, Earlie and Danny Fugate met Winans when the gospel singer asked Earlie’s son, Kendall Washington, to perform on stage with her in Chicago. From that one meeting, the gospel singer has taken a shine to Washington and stays in touch with him and his family. Earlie Fugate asked Winans if she would consider speaking during a women’s conference at Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church on Saturday , and the singer readily accepted.

Then Fugate asked if she would consider doing a benefit concert in conjunction with Mount Moriah and the McCracken County Community Career Endowment. The McCracken County Community Career Endowment was created by the late Fred Paxton and his wife, Peggy, and the \$1 million endowment is aimed at helping minorities find and keep good jobs locally.

Fugate said the concert's proceeds will benefit youth programs.

"We want to help our community grow," she said. "We want to keep our youth here so that they have the opportunity to become whatever they want to be. We have a great community college here. We send people there to get an education."

Businesses and individuals are sponsoring the concert and providing tickets to youth who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford to attend the show. Fugate said 95 percent of the local African-American community has not been into the Carson Center for a show because of the expense.

"I am so excited about coming to Paducah," Winans said in a telephone interview Friday morning on "First Friday," a program on WDXR-1450 AM hosted by J.W. Cleary and Patrick White. Winans was interviewed by Fugate and Bernice Belt, an associate minister at Washington Street Missionary Baptist Church in Paducah, for the program. "I think it's wonderful what you're doing there giving out scholarships and empowering young people."

Winans talked about the upcoming concert and sang a verse of "The Rainbow," one of her most popular songs. The song "helped me through my mom's death," she said.

Winans said she sang her first solo at age 8.

"I was born and raised in the church, so I didn't have any choice," she said.

Winans will perform about 20 shows this month, part of the reason she has earned the title "hardest working woman in gospel music." She said she enjoys seeing young children at her shows.

"I love to see people, like Kendall, who love my music and so

inspire me,” she said. “I dance with them, laugh with them and love them. Young people know when you really love them. They know when it’s fake and when it’s real.”

Winans said she is also glad her music inspires other women.

“You have to hang in there, hold in there,” she said. “Give your tithe, give your blessing. The Bible says give and it shall be given to you in good measure. Give of yourself, your smile and of your every day life. If you don’t have material things, you can give gestures. When your turn comes for a blessing, it’s going to come your way.”

Winans’ latest CD, “Happy Holidays from Vickie Winans,” was released Tuesday. Music is available at www.vickiewinans.com.