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UNITY DAY COMMITTEE TO KICK OFF MAJOR FUND-RAISING EFFORT Goal is to spend year raising funds to improve event set for 2004

VALLEJO – The City of Vallejo's Human Relations Commission has voted to postpone this year's Unity Day celebration in order to concentrate on fund-raising for the 2004 event.

"I endorse the Human Relations Commission's action for several reasons," City Manager David Martinez said. "It's prudent to ensure adequate funding for the event, and I think the original purpose of the day – to address racial unity in Vallejo – has greatly improved. I still believe in the value of diversity. In fact, diversity is one of our city's strengths."

A public forum will be held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, August 6, 2003 in the Joseph Room of the JFK Library. The purpose of the meeting is to solicit ideas from the public on fund-raising and other ideas for the award-winning event.

"One of the main reasons for postponing Unity Day this year was due to the budget cuts and the need for funding for many of our City's service organizations and non-profits," said Liat Meitzenheimer, member of the City's Human Relations Commission. "We realized that many of those groups would seek funding not only from the City, but from many of the same sources from which we would solicit funds.

Meitzenheimer said the commission felt keeping various groups operating in the community was a top priority.

"We hope to have many of the City's organizations help plan and pull off a successful event in 2004," she said. "We want people to join us in coming up with some fund raising ideas so that we can be prepared for next year's Unity Day."

Unity Day was first introduced by Martinez shortly after his arrival in December 1998. The goal of the event was to bring together the diverse cultures that make up the City of Vallejo in an informal, educational and entertaining venue for a day of food, music and cultural exchange. In 1999, the city was

received the League of California Cities Diverse Community Award for the Unity Day Celebration.

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"This will allow us to do some fund-raising, which will then allow us to bring bigger, more recognizable acts to Vallejo," said Debora Boutte, Acting Human Resources Director and main organizer of the Unity Day event. "We've had wonderful support in the past from various donors, and they have helped make Unity Day a success. But we've always wanted that one big name to attract larger crowds."

Unity Day 2004 is scheduled for Saturday, September 25.