



THE SOCIAL PAGE: 24TH ANNUAL BLACK CREATIVITY GALA

## Black Creativity Gala celebrates innovators

By Kevin McKeough  
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In 1958, Charles Harrison devised a low-cost way of manufacturing the View-Master, a hand-held device for viewing three-dimensional photographs affixed on paper reels. The redesigned View-Master's inexpensive price helped turn a product that had been intended for adults into an iconic toy that is still manufactured today.

The View-Master is among the innovations featured in the exhibit "Black Creativity 2007: Designs for Life" at the Museum of Science and Industry, and Harrison was among the crowd of 1,100 at the museum Saturday evening for the 24th annual Black Creativity Gala.

"It's very gratifying to be recognized," said Harrison, who teaches at Columbia College Chicago. "Industrial design is kind of an unknown profession. I'm happy children can look at this profession as an alternative to architecture or interior design."

Initiated in 1971, the annual "Black Creativity" exhibit highlights the accomplishments of African-Americans in science and technology, and runs from the weekend before Martin Luther King Day through the end of February, Black History Month. This year, the interactive exhibit focuses on contemporary African-American industrial designers, presenting the process and the people behind the cell phones, gym shoes, backpacks, light switches and other everyday products on display.

"It's just amazing. Who knew?" observed NBC-Ch. 5 anchorman Warner Saunders, who was one of the evening's master of ceremonies and was accompanied by his wife, Sadako. "You don't ever see this group of designers together at the same time."

"We're trying to give kids role models in science and technology," said David Mosena, the museum's president and CEO, who was at the party with his wife, Pat. "In any community, kids need to know there are people like them who have achieved great things so they can do it too."

An invitation to the Black Creativity Gala is one of the hottest tickets in town, but Twyler Jenkins had one that's even hotter: She'll be attending the Super Bowl in Miami on Sunday.

"I'm from Indiana and I live in Chicago, so I'm in a win-win situation either way," said Jenkins.

Museum volunteer Corey James helped set up the exhibit at the behest of his mother, Anita Green, who's on the exhibit's advisory committee, and it reinforced his commitment to finish his studies at the National Academy of Design and Technology, where he's studying multimedia design. "A lot of the guys [featured] on the [exhibit] wall, they're from the streets too," he said.

Sy Hopson and his fiancée, Tonya Banks, who are aiming for a December wedding date, were excited to see her cousin, Katherine Gruber, featured in the exhibit for her work designing Nike shoes. The couple met in a foster parent training class -- he has adopted two foster daughters, and she, mother of three, also is foster mom to a 17-year-old girl. "Helping people less fortunate is very gratifying," Banks said.

Keith Chambers, chief operating officer for the Illinois Department of Employment Security, warmly greeted state representative Art Turner and talked about trying to set a date to play golf.

"I think about it a lot more than I get a chance to play it," Turner lamented. Looking out from the back wall across the long rows of tables, he added, "it's good to honor the things black people have achieved. If you look at every table, there's probably someone who reflects history."

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