

YSU

King: Positive energy a key

By: Eric GROSSO
FEATURES REPORTER

Son of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. gathered with Valley leaders on Friday hoping to advise attendees to work together to create a new vision with a positive image for Youngstown's future.

Martin Luther King III encouraged those who took part in "One Valley Conversation" that the meeting should serve as one of many talks that attempt

to reform the image of Youngstown.

King insists the beginning to any project like this is positive energy.

"It's amazing when you put positive energy out what you get back in return," King said.

The conference featured about 30 area business, education, labor, and diversity leaders.

King, born 1957, is the second oldest of four chil-

please see **KING**, Page 6

children born to Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King. King is currently the chief executive officer of the King Center in Atlanta. He was invited to Youngstown because he has a reputation for bringing various groups of a community together, according to Susan Moorer, executive director of Leadership Mahoning Valley.

King noted that he didn't know a lot about Youngstown, but said that from the outside, Youngstown had a reputation for being a mob town and a once thriving industrial city that has seen a decline in last few decades.

King said he hoped that Friday's discussions would serve the start of a "blueprint" to change Youngstown that would be created after similar talks in the future.

"It will take the entire community to make Youngstown great," urged King.

The need for an identity, King said, should be a main goal for community leaders

in all areas. He said that when there is a positive image of a city, people would want to come back.

King split the attendees into groups of about five and encouraged them to answer and discuss a series of questions aimed at formulating a plan for change.

The five groups each had a spokesperson that reported results of discussions. A common theme of responses was the need for cultivating youth in the Valley.

"These kids need to be practicing success at an early age," William Blake, director of Student Diversity Programs at YSU, said. "Everyone in this room needs to be mentoring a kid, teaching them how to succeed."

Wendy Webb, superintendent of Youngstown City School District, noted the Valley media might be having a significant effect on youth. She said the integrity of reporting needs to be looked at as well, citing headlines that often read "fugitive of the week" rather

than "student of the week," which may be giving children an inferiority complex.

King noted how media outlets in certain markets, such as co-sponsor WYTV Channel 33, are now attempting to bring a positive image to their area. King took part in an on-air WYTV broadcast Thursday, hoping to aid in the improvement of labor management relations in the area.

He also talked about how the station is trying to get people talking in a productive manner about the Valley, citing WYTV's "Government in Crisis" and "Steel to Scholars" as important programs that help "reframe" talks about the Valley.

After the discussion, King urged talks to continue. Admitting that he didn't know a lot about the city, he urged those in attendance that they are the ones who

"have a hand on the pulse" of Youngstown and insisted that the young people of the Valley must become "the lightning rod" of what current leaders are working on now.

Many said having King in the area to help guide them was a big step toward changing the image of Youngstown.

"He's such a hero, his father is such a hero. It's almost an eerie feeling just to be in his presence," said Susan Moorer, executive director of Leadership Mahoning Valley.

King also attended a luncheon at the Holiday Inn Metroplex in Girard on Friday. The event, sponsored by the Youngstown / Warren Regional Chamber, honored local school districts that received "Excellent" ratings on the 2004-05 state report card.

Call Eric Grosso at (330) 941-1913.