

Exhibit features vision of Urban League leader



Bill Johnson, president of the Urban League of Rochester, displays his photographs, which were part of the black artists exhibit at St. John Fisher College.

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — William Johnson, president of the Urban League of Rochester, Inc., tends to get caught up in his work. So about eight years ago, he decided he should leave his office occasionally and stare at people and buildings.

No, Johnson hasn't lost his senses, he's merely developed one of them beyond the average person's capacity — his sense of sight. Johnson spends his spare time working on his hobby, photography.

The results of his steady effort at improving his photographic skills were on display in Haffey Lounge at St. John Fisher College. Johnson's work was part of two-week exhibition of black artists' work entitled *Art for Black History Month — An invitational exhibit of Black art by local artists*, that ended its run last Saturday, Feb. 18.

Eighteen area black artists participated in the exhibit, which featured sculptures, paintings and photographs.

Johnson felt privileged to be numbered among the featured artists. "This is the first time I've displayed anything," he said. "I don't expect anybody to buy anything. I'll entertain myself."

Johnson's humility was not shared by the exhibit's organizer, Gwen Martins, who asked him to put together some work for the exhibit. Seven of Johnson's photographs occupied a display wall at the exhibit. Three of his photos were of city scenes, while the rest focused on gentler subjects, such as a sunbather pulling her child's tricycle and a bottle of wine illuminated by candlelight.

Johnson said he carries his camera and several rolls of film with him whenever he travels. "Now when I travel about, I'm more aware of what's around me," he noted. He often stops his car to shoot interesting roadside subjects. "There are occasions when I've driven 15 miles down the road, and I can't get an image out of my mind, so I turn around and take the picture."

Johnson will have plenty of opportunity for such turnarounds when he and a friend travel across the United States this spring on a photography jaunt. "Some scenes you have to catch at the right moment," he said. Johnson hoped many such moments come his way as he peers over the steering wheel, driving through America.

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