

Urban Outreach Ministries to have introductory brunch

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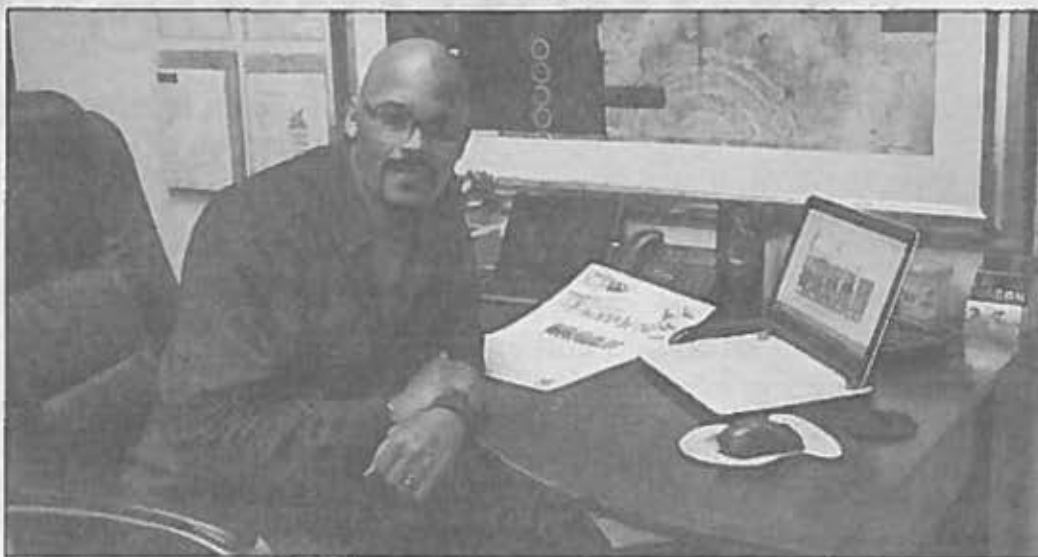
LAKE COUNTY — Donovan Simons believes it isn't enough just to want change, but people have to be the change they want to see in their communities.

Simons found his way to be the change by starting Urban Outreach Ministries, a nonprofit group using creative arts, educational and mentoring programs involving community members of all ages to make a difference in people's lives.

UOM became official nonprofit group on March 22, and Simons is in the initial stages of launching the outreach to the Lake County residents. There will be a brunch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 13, at the Yates Township Community Center located at 6437 Nelson Road, Idlewild, to offer local residents a chance to learn more about the outreach through a presentation and become involved by voicing needs in their communities. Doors open at 10:30 a.m.

As a photographer, singer, poet, graphic artist and humanitarian, Simons believes the creative arts can help communities unite and thrive.

"This outreach has been in the planning for quite some time," Simons said. "I want to include youth and senior citizens in music, drama, education and community service



MINISTRY: Donovan Simons hopes to make a positive difference in Lake County communities through Urban Outreach Ministries. (Lake County Star photo/Shanna Avery)

programs as a creative outlet. I hope by including these two age groups together it will bridge the generation gap. There is so much they can learn from each other. There are programs they can do together. They can form good mentoring relationships.

"I don't want UOM to just be my program, but a community effort. I have spoken with Sheriff Rich Martin, at-risk youth, pastors and some students who attend Baldwin Community Schools," he said.

Simons, a native of Bermuda, began ministering to others through music as a child when he played piano at nursing homes with his family. He continued reaching out to others when he moved to the United States in 1992.

"As a young adult, I had my

initial introduction to community work, volunteering with at-risk youth and becoming involved in prison ministries," he said.

Since moving to Lake County in 2015, Simons has continued to reach out to residents. On June 9, he and his family will sing at Grand Oaks Nursing Center, entertaining residents with rhythm and blues, oldies and popular hymns.

"The nursing home ministry is just as much a blessing to me as it is to the residents. They don't always have friends and family who come see them, so it serves as an outlet for them to have others to interact with. I define ministry as what we give to others. Each person has at least one gift, and working together to share these gifts is what ministry is about," he said.