

Williamsboro 2nd grader gets education at national gospel music convention

By Anita Hare

Contributing Writer

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For Fairfield County students, Aug. 9 was a day filled with butterflies and great anticipation as they bustled through hallways on the first day of school.

But for Kelly Miller Elementary School second grader Roman Broome, it was a day for another kind of excitement.

Roman was more than 600 miles from his school, performing at the 32nd annual Gospel Music Workshop of America (GMWA) in New Orleans.

As a percussionist for the Midlands Chapter of the GMWA, Roman had the opportunity to play before hundreds of music lovers.

The convention - the world's largest and greatest gospel

music gathering - was founded by gospel music legend, the late Dr. James Cleveland. Participants enjoy a week of seminars and nightly musicals, and have the opportunity to showcase their talents.

Roman participated in percussion classes and labs offered through the academic division of the convention. The expertise, discipline and direction he received will benefit him and help him achieve his musical goals in life.

The GMWA Convention has been and continues to be a launching pad for gospel music's greatest performers.

More than 20,000 singers, musicians, recording executives, ministers and gospel music artists from around the world converge on New Orleans for

fellowship and to exhibit their musical talents, ranging from traditional and contemporary to gospel jazz.

Members compete for national scholarships, and recordings are also produced during the week.

Gospel recording artists attending this year's convention included the Rev. John P. Kee, The Williams Brothers, Fred Hammond, Richard Smallwood, Albertina Walker among others.

Roman had the opportunity to meet and have his picture taken with Dr. Bobby Jones, producer and host of Black Entertainment Television's "Bobby Jones Gospel" (BET's top-rated program) and "Video Gospel" (A half-hour gospel program featuring top Christian videos.

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Roman Broome with recording artist and BET host Dr. Bobby Jones and 'Bobby Jones Gospel' host Merdean Gales.

Broome

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Roman's parents, Michael and Belindra Broome, were at first reluctant to allow Roman to miss the first week of school, to further his musical ambitions. But they later agreed to let him take advantage of the great opportunity.

One of the drawbacks for Roman was the long hours. Convention activities continued almost around the clock, and he didn't have a curfew that week.

One night, he attended Kirk Franklin and The Family's Youth Night's television taping for the United Negro College Fund, which didn't begin until 11 and continued until 2 a.m.

The long hours affected his energy level, and by the end of the week, the usually energetic Roman was harder to wake up in the mornings.

One of the highlights of the trip had nothing to do with gospel music. This was Roman's first

time flying on an airplane, and he was able to visit the cockpit and talk to the pilot. One of the stewardesses also gave him some Delta Airline wings.

Roman, the grandson of the late Robert and Ida Broome, is well-known around school for his talents.

"All I do is see him carrying around his bookbag with drumsticks sticking out," says fourth grader Khadija Kareem.

Roman's talents are paying off locally as well. This year, he will be allowed to march with the Fairfield Central High School Band, according to his mother.

The Midlands Chapter of the Gospel Music Workshop of America is composed of choir members from across the Midlands, as well as Charleston and Greenville.

The chapter is currently seeking new members. For more information, call Carolyn Jones at (803) 754-0370.