



Dianne Watkins with cast of bell

Bells for Peace Inaugural Event ... A Ringing Success

By Rudolph Hickman, April 23, 2006

I was overcome by a sense of excitement and anticipation from the moment I entered Saint Paul's Baptist Church on Sunday, April 23rd. The warm greetings, enthusiastic whispers and majestic tones of Handbell Choirs from Miles Jones Elementary School and The James River Ringers, Inc. combined to suggest this would be a memorable and enjoyable evening.

I am sure I speak for all when I say; the evening was a ringing success.

From beginning to end, Bells for Peace, Incorporated's *Bells and Beyond Program* satiated the sensory palates of its supporters and well-wishers with a veritable smorgasbord of musical offerings, historical commentary and plain ole-fashioned southern hospitality.

Kudos go to our hosts, The Bells for Peace Foundation, for its masterful planning and exquisite program execution. The foundation's vision of *replacing the bells in VUU's Van Memorial Tower; preserving the Belgium Building, and advancing VUU's excellence in higher education internationally* was evinced by each program detail, from choosing the sacred majesty of Saint Paul's Main Sanctuary to the elegant design of the souvenir book.

Touted as the foundation's inaugural fundraising event, the charming and lovely Sabrina Squire, *WWBT NBC 12 News* Anchor emceed the program. Squire performed masterfully as she wove the tapestry of peace, friendship and honoring the past that symbolized the program's main themes.

The awe inspiring performances of acclaimed pianist, harpist and singer, Paul Balfour; The Richmond Boys Choir; The Suffolk Ballet; and The Mass Choir reiterated these themes and gave them spirited voice and balladic interpretation. It was quite simply, delightful.

To commemorate the occasion, Dianne Watkins, a descendent of Dr. John M. and Elizabeth Balfour Ellison, and Chair, Bells for Peace, Inc., was presented with a cast bronze bell manufactured by the Verdin Company to commemorate the occasion.

VUUNAA President, N. Scott Phillips; Esq., State Senator Benjamin Lambert, III, and Ray Chew, CEO RC Music were on hand to offer support and well wishes.

Those wishing to support this worthwhile project may contact *Bells for Peace, Inc.*, P O Box 27371, Richmond, VA 23261-7371 or on the web: www.bellsforpeace.org
Photos of the event may be viewed at: www.rudolphhickmanphotography.smugmug.com