



Jeff Bowen / El Paso Times

Frances Grundy Hills, a volunteer coordinator at the McCall Neighborhood Center, talked about some of the historical exhibits on display in the center. Hills is holding a portrait of the Douglass School class of which Olalee McCall was principal.

McCall Center a 'cultural base'

By Joe Olvera
El Paso Times

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The old Douglass School is gone, but alumni of the city's former African-American school have found another focal point for their community — the McCall Neighborhood Center.

Nicky Mathis, a jazz singer who's in town attending a reunion of Douglass School graduates, said the McCall Center in Central El Paso fills a great need.

"We lost our cultural base when we lost Douglass High School," Mathis said during a tour Friday of the center at 3221 Wyoming. "This center now has taken over from the school as a place for us to get together."

The McCall Center is built around the former home of Olalee McCall, a former

McCALL CENTER

- **Where:** 3231 E. Wyoming.
- **Hours:** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays.
- **How much:** free.
- **Information:** 566-2407.

Douglass principal, and her husband Marshall.

Leona Washington who helps run the center, said it's important for African-Americans because it gives them a focus and a sense of history.

"Many blacks from out of town don't know about the Buffalo Soldiers and how



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Some of the artwork on display at the McCall Center includes hand-crafted wood sculptures by El Paso artist Willie Armstrong.

they helped protect the Old West," Washington said. The Buffalo Soldiers were African-American regiments that helped pioneer the West after the Civil War.

"What's important is that blacks have been a part of this community since its earliest history," she said.

In addition to exhibits of the history of African-Americans in El Paso, the McCall Center provides classes on a variety of subjects.

The Douglass reunion ends with a concert featuring Mathis and other alumni at 7 p.m. today at the civic center. Tickets are \$17.50.