

BLACK EXPO IS NO LONGER JUST FOR - Columbus Dispatch, The (OH) - September 2, 1988 - page 4F

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A group of minority businesses got together eight years ago, and 35 participated in the first Columbus **Black Expo** at the Focal Point of Mount Vernon Plaza.

That one-day event, founded by Rhonda D. Robinson, has become the two-day **Ohio Black Expo**. It has more than 300 exhibitors and has moved to larger accommodations, spokesman Tim Widman said.

The **Ohio Black Expo** will be open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday and from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday in Veterans Memorial.

"After last year's **expo**, it was clear to us that the (Mount Vernon Plaza) space could no longer hold the folks and the exhibitors," Widman said, explaining the move.

Last year, the **expo** drew about 30,000 spectators and about 225 exhibitors, he said.

The **expo** board, Widman said, believed the time had come for a statewide minority business event. Last October, the board began laying groundwork to give the **expo** a broader name and move the event to a large indoor site.

Widman said about 300 exhibitors have reserved booths. Booth rentals are \$500 for corporations, \$200 for smaller businesses, and \$150 for non-profit groups.

Because the **expo** pays rent for its indoor space, for the first time it is charging admission - \$3 per person, Widman said. Admission includes daytime entertainment and seminars.

"We have succeeded in keeping our hands out of people's pockets while still paying the bills," he said.

"When you have an outdoor event, you are completely dependent upon nature, and it was becoming too big of a gamble," Widman said. "Even if you don't have to contend with the rain, you will probably have to deal with extreme heat."

In previous years, local exhibitors and some from outside **Ohio** were involved in the **expo**, but very few exhibitors from other parts of **Ohio** took part.

This year's **expo** will include exhibitors from many of the other large cities in **Ohio** and from New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Philadelphia and Detroit.

CITATION (MLA STYLE)

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