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said. "Everybody is different, but we're all people and in general, you're either from Fairmont, the surrounding areas or a transplant."

With the idea of similarity as the theme of the event, hip hop served as the backdrop. Different rappers and artists shared the stage at Palatine, demonstrating not only their artistry, but meaning behind the music.

"I believe before you unify you have to identify," said Lamar Riddick, a rapper from Morgantown. "You have to identify who you are, you have to identify what the need is before you can unify together. So for me, being a believer in Jesus, I found my identity in him."

Riddick's performance got members of the crowd moving, his songs accompanied by the beats of a live local drummer. A writer of his own music, which he classified as Christian rap, Riddick hoped his words made it through to the people watching.

"I hope people will feel empowered and encouraged in life," Riddick said. "Either they're going to enjoy it or they're going to attack it, and usually when people are attacking it's because they see people in them that is called out that they don't want to change."

Washington said that one of his goals of bringing these artists together was to develop the scene in north central West Virginia, because the uniting power of music



PHOTO BY TAMMY SHRIVER

Rapper Lamar Riddick lays down lines Saturday on the stage of Palatine Park in his signature Christian rap style of music.

can act best when shared in a group, and people need to be aware of it to be able to group.

"If you're not with a label or something you can't really get on a stage like this, in a setting like this," Washington said. "So I think it may be able to help jump start an actual hip hop scene

in Fairmont.

"It's good that we have hip hop here."

The young kids in the audience who may not have heard much hip hop in their lives could potentially have been some of the most affected by the music, with Riddick saying that he hoped to inspire them to cre-

ate.

"I think for the most part, especially for the younger generation, creating in a way that entertains them, but writing in a way that convinces them of something," Riddick said. "To empower them or to motivate them to do something, people take it either way."

The variety of music and artistry showcased at the fest helped underline this message, and Washington, who performed the final set of the evening, was happy that he played a part in an event centered on community engagement.

"We just had gospel rap, just had a choir," Washing-

ton said. "We have an interpretive dancer, and it's just to unite people in every way possible to have a good time. No worries, no agenda; just enjoy the people."

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