

Obamas mixing Everyman, high society

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- The Obama administration has met with editors of three Washington lifestyle magazines to explore how they can connect with the community, an aide said.

Editors of three upper-crust magazines -- Capitol File, DC magazine and Washington Life -- met with administration officials to discuss, among other things how first couple Barack and Michelle Obama can embrace Washington's social scene, The Washington Times reported Friday.

The administration is "identifying taste makers in order to help create grass-roots interest in some of the programs they are working on," said Washington Life's Michael Clements, an attendee. "They wanted to introduce themselves. It was certainly a departure from previous administrations."

Tony Hudgins, DC magazine's associate publisher, agreed, telling the Times the Obamas "are trying to push the vibrancy of Washington night life to the forefront."

A White House aide told the Times the meeting was to explore how the Obamas can "engage in the community," noting meetings also were conducted with of sports, entertainment and philanthropic organizations in Washington.

Chuck Conconi, a former Washington area social columnist, said the Obamas are following former first couple Ronald and Nancy Reagan by mixing together social Washington, political figures and Hollywood.

"They remind me a lot of the Reagans," Conconi said. "No one used the social structure of Washington quite like Ronald Reagan."

But in this time of economic stress, the Obamas must watch what they do, cautioned Shelia Tate, press secretary to Nancy Reagan.

"The White House should entertain and entertain appropriately," Tate told the Times. "But the economy should be the No. 1 priority right now, not parties."

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