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Lt. Governor speaks at MLK celebration

Ohioans receive awards for carrying on MLK legacy

Columbus — Lt. Governor Mary Taylor spoke today at the 29th annual Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration held at the Trinity Episcopal Church, Columbus. The event was sponsored by the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission.

“Dr. King helped change our culture and our country,” Taylor said. “He challenged Americans to look at the world in a different way. As we honor his life and his legacy now, we must continue to follow his teachings and his message as we strive for a better world for our children and their children.”

Later in the program, Taylor and the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission recognized the following five Ohioans for their efforts to advance social change:

Governor’s Humanitarian Award criteria: *The recipient of this award has acted independently of associations and organizations. The recipient has given his or her time and service freely to those in need without question and often without recognition. This award honors quiet soldiers who promote the welfare of humanity and elimination of pain and suffering through their own selfless service.*

Winner: Juanita Hollis, Toledo — A retired social worker and family advocate, Juanita Hollis is a volunteer who generously offers her time, energy, emotional energy and professional expertise through her own initiative to help improve people’s lives.

Hollis has volunteered at The Giving Store, a mission of her church, Glenwood Lutheran in Toledo, since it opened two years ago. The store provides free clothing and household items to those in need. Hollis has donated countless hours to advocate for the store’s customers and other people who do not have the knowledge or resources to advocate for themselves. Hollis is unparalleled in her efforts to help people navigate their way through what can be a very complex and sometimes frustrating social services network.

In addition, Hollis runs a support group for those who encounter mental illness, assists family and friends with their needs, and attends conferences and workshops to enhance her ability to help others. Caring for others, through her advocacy, is the fabric of Juanita’s life.

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Community Building Award criteria: *The recipient selected in this category has made significant contributions toward building a sense of unity among Ohio citizens. The recipient has demonstrated the ability to build safer communities through various activities and programs that help to revitalize areas and make our communities a more wholesome and desirable place for living, learning and loving. The recipient has used Dr. King's vision of nonviolent social change in her efforts to successfully bring people from diverse backgrounds together in order to build a better community.*

Winner: Dr. Lorna Gonsalves, Maumee — Dr. Lorna Gonsalves has been using creative nonviolent strategies for prompting holistic community development since the 1990s. For the past 10 years, Gonsalves, who holds a doctorate degree in social psychology, has volunteered seven days a week with any donations going toward her initiatives. The goals of her efforts as a student, teacher, administrator and activist have been to work with people from marginalized groups and to use nonviolent approaches to address the realities of racism and classism and the intersections of these factors with other forms of diversity. Hailed as a renaissance woman with an impressive track record of positive outcomes, Gonsalves develops unique and ground-breaking programs.

Cultural Awareness Award criteria: *The recipient selected in this category has demonstrated an appreciation for diversity and evidenced skill in building and maintaining harmonious cross-cultural relationships. The recipient's achievements foster Dr. King's vision of unity among people of diverse cultural backgrounds.*

Winner: Kelton House Museum and Garden, Columbus — For more than 30 years, the Kelton House Museum and Garden has educated visitors about Columbus area history through the eyes of the Kelton family, who occupied the home from 1852 until 1975. Because the Kelton family sheltered fugitive slaves on their way to freedom in Canada, museum tours teach about the family's role as part of the Underground Railroad. To further impact young people, in 2002 the museum began the Underground Railroad Learning Station, a program where students learn about the Underground Railroad through a living history re-enactment, readings, exhibits and workbook activities. More than 37,000 Columbus area students and 5,000 adults have taken part in the Underground Railroad Learning Station program.

Economic Opportunity Award criteria: *The recipient in this category may be an organization or individual who seeks to improve the quality of life for its citizens in economically challenged areas through economic-incentive programs. The recipient has demonstrated accomplishments in one or more of the following areas: workforce development programs; upgrading skills of existing workforce; infrastructure improvements; creation of community partnerships; housing assistance programs; energy efficiency programs; environmental programs; encouragement of new business startups; or ability to take advantage of state and federal aid to provide economic opportunity.*

Winner: Pastor Eugene Norris II, Akron — Pastor Eugene Norris II has proven to be an innovative thinker when it comes to workforce development and leveraging

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resources. He used his knowledge of energy efficiency programs to help the financial needs of the fathers participating in FameFathers, a nonprofit organization he serves as chief executive officer. Outside of his responsibilities as CEO, he developed the Green Dads Program with community partners. The Green Dads Program trains fathers as well as mothers to participate in the energy auditing profession. Encouraging minorities to move into the energy arena has fostered small business growth. In addition, their new found skills and resources have helped to lower household utility costs and allowed senior citizens to stay in their homes and age in place.

Educational Excellence Award criteria: *The recipient selected in this category recognizes the personal commitment and example that King provided for academic achievement. Therefore, the recipient has demonstrated a personal commitment to scholarship and/or attainment of educational goals despite significant barriers or obstacles. The recipient also has demonstrated outstanding accomplishments in eradicating systemic barriers that impede the attainment of academic excellence.*

Winner: Timothy Roberts, Cleveland — After witnessing tragedy after tragedy involving young men in the community, Timothy Roberts founded the BRICK program. BRICK stands for Brotherhood, Respect, Intelligence, Conduct and Knowledge. Through this male-mentoring program now based out of a couple of Cleveland-area schools, Roberts has helped divert negative energy into a positive outlet for Cleveland's youth. Teens have learned the principals of BRICK through success at school and community involvement, such as reading to younger children and mentoring other youth. BRICK has evolved into a larger initiative to further impact Cleveland's youth.

Today's event also featured the following winners from the 2013 Statewide MLK Oratorical Contest, which also is sponsored by the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission. The winners of this April contest who spoke today were Olivia Moore, age 9, Beachwood; McKenna Hensley, age 13, New Albany; and Larry Fulton, age 16, Pepper Pike.

The commission is housed in the Equal Opportunity Division of the Ohio Department of Administrative Services, which provides centralized support for state agencies.

For more information about the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission, visit das.ohio.gov/eod/mlk.