
Ohio Department of Administrative Services
Bob Taft, *Governor*
Scott Johnson, *Director*

Office of Communications
Suite 3960
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Columbus, Ohio 43215

News Release



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MLK CELEBRATION HONORS OHIOANS WORKING FOR PEACE AND RACIAL HARMONY

(Columbus) — Lt. Governor Bruce Johnson and Treasurer of State Jennette Bradley led the State of Ohio's 20th annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration today in Columbus honoring Ohioans for their efforts to advance nonviolent social change.

"Few men have had as much of a positive impact on our nation as Dr. King," said Lt. Governor Bruce Johnson. "His words and deeds continue to inspire each of us to live a just life and to work hand in hand with our fellow man to make our world a better place."

"Voices Raised for Freedom" was the theme for this year's event, which was sponsored by the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission.

"Dr. King changed the world with his dream that all God's children would live in peace and fellowship with each other," Bradley said. "Today, nearly 40 years after an assassin's bullet stole from our midst this committed crusader for peace, justice and brotherhood, Dr. King's life and death remind us that the priceless treasures of true brotherhood, lasting peace and justice for all require hard work, persistent vigilance and sometimes great sacrifice."

The following awards were presented in a noon ceremony at Trinity Episcopal Church:

Governor's Humanitarian Award -- Brenda Scarborough, Youngstown. Scarborough, an employee of Maag Library at Youngstown State University, has been actively involved in humanitarian work both on and off campus since 1997. She has helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for the American Cancer Society of Mahoning Valley. Her long list of volunteer activities also includes mentoring high school students and serving as treasurer of the YSU Black Faculty and Staff Association. Nominators called Scarborough a "selfless person" and a "drum major for peace" who gladly performs unglamorous work on projects to ensure successful outcomes.

Community Building Award -- Jim McGregor, Gahanna. State Rep. Jim McGregor has championed diversity throughout his career in public service. McGregor served as mayor of Gahanna for 18 years prior to his appointment to the Ohio General Assembly in 2001. While mayor, he appointed African-Americans to high-ranking positions in city government including the directors of Development and Public Safety. McGregor also encouraged African-Americans to move to Gahanna, an effort that increased their share of the city's population from 2 percent in the 1970's to 18 percent today.

Cultural Awareness Award -- Larry Hamilton, Piqua. Hamilton is the founder and organizer of Promoting Recognition of Diversity (PROD) which is dedicated to increasing the number of minority teachers in Piqua. Under Hamilton, PROD has raised scholarship money for deserving minority students and has encouraged them to teach in Piqua after receiving their degrees. Hamilton personally recruits many candidates. PROD also promotes an annual banquet to recognize minority students and parents for their accomplishments throughout the school year.

Economic Opportunity Award -- Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton; Betty M. Smith, Canton; and Francine E. Williams, Bridgeport. Recipients of this award have used economic incentive programs to improve the quality of life for residents of impoverished areas.

The Sisters of Charity Foundation in Canton is committed to serving the needs of the poor by examining the root causes of poverty. It provides grants, technical assistance and facilitation to agencies and organizations serving

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the needy. Projects supported by the foundation include a Quality Child Care Initiative and a Health Care Access Initiative.

Betty Smith is founder and executive director of Multi-Development Services of Stark County, a not-for-profit organization addressing community needs. Services include mentoring, housing assistance, utility assistance, home beautification and an after-school drug prevention program.

Francine Williams provides dependable, quality childcare for single mothers, allowing them to partake in educational programs or gainful employment. To minimize use of government funds, the women she serves are concentrating on becoming more productive in the business field.

Educational Excellence Award -- Heather Ness, Columbus. Ness served as the sole director and driving force behind the Educational Council, a partnership of school districts in Franklin County, from its inception in 1986 to her retirement in October 2004. Ness used consensus-building skills to transform the council from a patchwork organization with two employees into a powerful alliance with a staff of 100. The council's programs include the Leader Institute. Over time, more than 900 students attended the Leader Institute where they learned lessons that included conflict management and self-esteem building.

Health, Equity and Awareness Award -- Dr. Kenneth Cowens, Youngstown. Cowens has volunteered over the past six years on a coalition fighting Hepatitis C. In doing so, he has treated and identified many patients who were unaware that they had the disease. He also is a member of the Ohio Commission on Minority Health.

Social Justice Award -- Beryl D. Anderson, Columbus. Anderson has spent a lifetime achieving justice for individuals and communities. She is a former Deputy Ohio Secretary of State and has worked closely with officials in all 88 counties to register voters and further election reform. Anderson also has investigated census undercounts of minorities on the state and federal level. Anderson also worked with legendary civil rights activist Rosa Parks, serving as her communications director for events marking the 40th anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott that Parks inspired. She also is an accomplished motivational speaker.

Youth: Capturing the Vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award -- Ech'O Wilson, Lincoln Heights. Wilson, 16, decided to improve her life two years ago and has become a beacon of hope in her neighborhood, an area plagued by crime and poverty. She set a goal of attending college to become a special education teacher after she began working closely with the youth services staff at Work Resource Center, a non-profit organization which helps people with disadvantages and disabilities transition into the workforce. She replaced below average grades with A's and B's, organized a local voter registration effort and has participated in a coat collection drive for the poor.

The event also featured speeches from the following winners of the 2004 MLK Oratorical Contest: Helanah Warren, Dublin; Sarah Wilkes, Columbus; and Ashley Yates, Copley.

The Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration is conducted with assistance from the Ohio Department of Administrative Services. The department provides centralized support for state agencies under the leadership of Director Scott Johnson.

**For more information, contact Ben Piscitelli or Gretchen Hull,
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