



Friday, February 20, 2004

OU celebrates Keeper of the Dream winners

By **Kelly Smith**, OU Writer

More than 400 people gathered at Oakland University's Shotwell-Gustafson Pavilion Feb. 19 to honor five OU students who promote racial understanding, serve as peer and community mentors, and contribute to the well being of others during the 12th annual **Keeper of the Dream Scholarship Awards Banquet**.

The banquet commemorates the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., honors the achievements of each Keeper of the Dream scholarship recipient and benefits future student scholarships.

"The Keeper of the Dream banquet has grown over the years into a cherished and anticipated campus event," said OU President Gary Russi in his banquet remarks. "Established to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., tonight's event connects our campus community, underscores Oakland University's commitment to diversity and involves the southeast Michigan community in our service mission."

The awards recognize students who have demonstrated strong citizenship, scholarship and leadership in breaking down cultural stereotypes and in promoting interracial understanding. Daniel Mulhern, first gentleman of Michigan, delivered the keynote address.

This year's **award recipients** include Lenwood Compton, an education major from Pontiac; George Davis, a journalism major from Grand Rapids; Joi Durant, a communications major from Sterling Heights; James Ellout, an English major from Pontiac; and Sophia Soldana, an elementary education major from Clinton Township.

Bank One, Beaumont Hospitals, Comerica, the **Oakland University Alumni Association** and PricewaterhouseCoopers each sponsored a \$5,000 scholarship award. Three of the sponsors, Bank One, Beaumont Hospitals and the OU Alumni Association, contributed an additional \$5,000 above and beyond the scholarship contribution to support the Keeper of the Dream Endowment. In addition, Cooley Law School donated \$8,000 for the speaker sponsorship.

"This award memorializes Dr. King's ideologies," said Ellout, publicity agent for Oakland's Student Congress and publicity chairman for the Association of Black Students. "It's an honor to be recognized for making a difference, but I know that I have a lot more work to do on campus."

Davis, who along with OU student Randi Clark opened the evening by singing a moving rendition of "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," noted the award gives him the courage to reach out to people who wouldn't necessarily reach out to him. "It's an unbelievable honor to receive an award that pays tribute to the courageous work that Martin Luther King Jr. did," said Davis who is a resident assistant with the Department of University Housing, a peer mentor in the Center for Multicultural Initiatives, vice president for the Association of Black Students and lead ambassador for the Office of Admissions. "I'm now presented with a challenge to help change the future by further promoting diversity on campus and in the community."

In addition, each scholarship recipient acknowledged the importance of education in breaking down cultural stereotypes, reflective of this year's theme "Fulfilling the Dream through Education"

"Education is the first step in fulfilling the Martin Luther King Jr. dream," said Durant, a King-Chavez-Parks College Day Program lead mentor and a telecounseling team leader/supervisor in the Office of Admissions. Soldana, who completed more than 900 hours of service for the AmeriCorps Oakland team, and Compton, who was recognized as "Mr. AmeriCorps" for 2001 and 2002, agreed that education is the most powerful tool in promoting interracial understanding and both pledged to continue to serve as examples of tolerance and understanding by becoming future educators.

In his keynote address, Mulhern referenced author Stephen R. Covey's popular leadership book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" and its message of broadening one's circle of care.

"Our circle of care should be inclusive, broad, wide," Mulhern said. "I invite everyone here to widen your circle of care and concern. Have the same care for others that you have for yourself."

Mulhern also urged the audience to step out of their comfort zones and take risks in demonstrating all-embracing fellowship. He noted that Dr. King and Mahatma Gandhi did not wait for prestigious titles before setting out to change the world.

"King and Gandhi didn't need to wait for certain power, they didn't need to wait for special titles. These leaders were restless in enlarging their circle of care."

The university's cable TV station, **OUTV**, will broadcast a recording of this year's Keeper of the Dream Banquet on various dates and times. OUTV programming is available on Comcast Cablevision Channel 74 in the following communities: Auburn Hills, Berkley, Clawson, Ferndale, Huntington Woods, Oakland Township, Pleasant Ridge, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Royal Oak and Troy.

SUMMARY

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