



Thursday, February 21, 2002

## Keeper of the Dream awards presented

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

In his opening remarks at Oakland University's 10th annual **Keeper of the Dream** Scholarship Awards Banquet, Associate Sociology Professor Kevin Early noted how far the event has come since it was first held in the tight confines of the Oakland Center Crockery.

"No one imagined 10 years ago that this event would become the number one event on our campus, or that it would create a legacy for Oakland," said Early, who helped create the program. "Just think of that legacy 10 years from now and decades into the future."

In contrast to the event's humble beginnings, nearly 600 people gathered at OU's Shotwell-Gustafson Pavilion on Feb. 20 to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The banquet was created to provide funds for student scholarships. The awards recognize students who have demonstrated strong citizenship, scholarship and leadership in breaking down cultural stereotypes and in promoting interracial understanding. The keynote address delivered by **Martin Luther King III**, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and second oldest child of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King, was a special addition to this year's banquet.

This year's **award recipients** include Ashli Bobo, a junior journalism major from Huber Heights, Ohio; Rhonda Hanna, a sophomore English major from Shelby Township; Joi Olden, a junior theatre performance major from Oak Park; and Diana Pochmara, a sophomore elementary education major from Lake Orion, who each received a \$5,000 scholarship. Erin Liebner, a senior English major from Monroe, received the Special Recognition Award.

"The scholarship is great and couldn't have come at a better time," said Pochmara, who in addition to her studies devotes about 900 hours annually to AmeriCorps Oakland. "I have to support myself since my father was laid off, and the scholarship allows me to be able to pick up my other bills. It is a huge honor and has really made a difference."

Bobo said her scholarship is a barometer of her academic success and will provide motivation for the future.

"I'm excited, honored and really delighted about this award," she said. "I think it will motivate me, because I see that what I have done so far in school has proven to be successful. Receiving this award further motivates me to excel in the future."

In his banquet greetings, which followed Early's welcoming remarks, OU President Gary Russi said the Keeper of the Dream is a key component of OU's **2010 university profile**.

"In the last few years, Oakland has been refining a vision of what it should be in the next 10 years. Our vision for 2010 builds on established strengths and moves to ensure that Oakland University will be well known for its distinctive undergraduate experience," Russi said. "With programs like Keeper of the Dream, we are confident that we will accomplish this goal. In addition to providing the financial help that so many OU students need and want, Keeper of the Dream scholarships encourage commitment and excellence in our diversity initiatives. This offers a strong example of the kinds of undergraduate programs that make Oakland a university of distinction.

"The Oakland University community remains deeply committed to Dr. King's dream. We truly believe that a diverse faculty, staff, and student body make for better education, better people and a better world."

Following the dinner, OU's Instructional Technology Team presented a video chronicling some of the banquet highlights from the past 10 years. After this, President Russi and Gloria Sosa, director of the **Office of Equity**, presented each of the student honorees with their awards.

In his keynote address, King made reference to his father's famous "I Have a Dream" speech and gave suggestions on how his father's concepts can be further extended in our universities and society.

"Surely my father had a dream, but it was a vision for a nation where freedom and justice and equality would exist for all humankind. That was accomplished legislatively, but has it been felt in people's hearts?" King asked. "One day we must change

our curriculums. Our's excludes African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latino-Americans and Native Americans. In our universities, we need to study the history of all people who make up America. We truly do not understand other cultures, and we need to learn how to embrace others. Are we diverse in our administrative, faculty and student populations? If not, we must redouble and triple our efforts to achieve diversity at all these levels."

King also described America as a "dysfunctional/functional nation," and said his father's civil disobedient stance for equality could be used as a blueprint for achieving his dream.

"If we work collectively, we can create a better community and world," he said. "It can only happen when a few good women and men come together. In my household, we learned the love ethic – to love ourselves, our family, our community and God. That's the kind of love we have to embrace in America if we're going to move forward."

After the keynote address, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Glenn McIntosh presented an award to Executive Events Consultant to the President Joy James Williams recognizing her past contributions and coordination of the banquet.

The Keeper of the Dream banquet served as the last event of OU's African-American Celebration 2002. But OU students, faculty and staff also reflected on the month's events during the closing ceremonies Feb. 19 in the Oakland Center's Fireside Lounge.

"So much of what we saw and heard this past month I consider a gift," said Mary Beth Snyder, vice president of student affairs, in her address at the closing ceremonies. "The speakers, panel discussions, dramatic events as well as the diversity fair and other events each gave us the gift of insight and a chance to enrich our lives. They helped shape us and make us happier and more satisfied human beings."

In addition to a gospel performance by Men of Grace, a gospel group from the Grace Center of Hope in Pontiac, Virinder Moudgil, vice president for academic affairs and provost, announced the winners of the fifth annual All-Campus Essay Contest commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Entrants were asked to compose an essay or poem that addressed the question: "What kind of hero do you envision yourself to be after you graduate from Oakland University?"

Senior elementary education major Heather Evans won the \$300 first prize for her essay "**The Hero in Me.**" John Torres and Karen DeVault each won \$100 for second and third prize, respectively.

#### **SUMMARY**

In his opening remarks at OU's 10th annual Keeper of the Dream Awards Banquet, Associate Sociology Professor Kevin Early noted how far the event has come since it was first held in the tight confines of the Oakland Center Crockery.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Thursday, February 21, 2002  
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Thursday, February 21, 2002  
Article Start Date: Wednesday, October 1, 2003