



Thursday, January 24, 2002

Scholarship program celebrates 10 years

By **Debbie Patrick**

On Feb. 20, Oakland University will celebrate the 10th anniversary of one of the most successful, inspiring and influential programs ever created on campus - the Keeper of the Dream Scholarship Awards Banquet.

Established in 1992 in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Keeper of the Dream serves to connect the campus community, to underscore the university's commitment to diversity and to involve the southeast Michigan community in OU's service mission.

OU alumni, partners and friends join with the campus community to recognize outstanding OU students who have demonstrated strong citizenship, scholarship and leadership in breaking down cultural stereotypes and in promoting interracial understanding.

Keeper of the Dream 2002 will celebrate The Dream, acknowledge The Journey, and continue The Legacy.

To help mark this milestone, OU is honored to present as keynote speaker, Martin Luther King III, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and son of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King.

A human rights advocate, community activist and political leader, King has been actively involved in significant policy initiatives to maintain the fair and equitable treatment of all citizens, at home and abroad. His messages and initiatives all are rooted within the tenets of nonviolent conflict resolution. Committed to the personal, educational and skill development of youth, he has initiated several programs throughout the years to support and nurture young people.

The Dream

Kevin Early, associate professor, Sociology, College of Arts and Sciences, created the Keeper of the Dream Scholarship program in 1992.

Inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a Dream" speech, delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963, Early worked to build a program that would reflect King's ideals and help keep the dream live at Oakland University. "There weren't any scholarships contributing to diversity at the time," Early recalls.

"There was nothing that brought the whole campus community together. I thought we should have a dinner because people come together at dinners. And I proposed we offer scholarship awards to students who exemplified King's ideals - who kept his dream alive."

The first Keeper of the Dream dinner was held Jan. 29, 1993, in The Crockery - a former Oakland Center eatery that could seat 300. But the dinner soon became a banquet that outgrew its original home. Since 1997, the event has been held in Oakland's Shotwell-Gustafson Pavilion, where it draws close to 800 celebrants annually.

The Journey

In the last decade, Keeper of the Dream has grown from a cherished but small program culminating in an informal event, into one of Oakland's most visible initiatives, with corporate sponsors providing named scholarships.

Ameritech, General Motors Corporation, Champion Enterprises Inc., Haden International Group, Bank One, William Beaumont Hospital, MSX International, Oxford Automotive and the J.S. Alberici Construction Co. Inc. all have sponsored \$5,000 scholarships in recent years.

"We went from \$250 to \$500 to \$1,000 for each scholarship award," Early said. "Now, we are able to provide up to \$5,000 for each award."

Last year, \$35,000 in scholarships was awarded.

Keeper of the Dream also enjoys support from the Oakland University Board of Trustees, the Office of the President, the Office of Equity, and OU faculty, staff and students.

The Legacy

Since 1993, 35 OU students have received Keeper of the Dream awards.

"All of the recipients have been extraordinary in their own right," Early said. "Lots have gone off to get doctoral degrees and master's degrees."

Several will return to campus to help celebrate the 10th anniversary, says Gloria Sosa, director, Office of Equity. "Bringing past winners to campus will personify the power of the award and what commitment to Dr. King's journey can mean to the Oakland community and to the external community."

Once, students had to be encouraged to apply for the award. Now, they seek out the distinction.

"Every year, I find more students express an interest in the award and what they need to do to be eligible," says Karen Lloyd, assistant dean of students, who chairs the selection committee. "They see it as an opportunity to build their skills, their character."

Nominees must possess a current cumulative grade point average of 3.0, demonstrate campus involvement and a record of responsible citizenship, write an essay of up to 500 words describing how they have made a positive impact toward improving interracial understanding at OU, and submit three letters of nomination from members of the university community.

"In the 21st century, I'd like to use the award to attract full-time students and retain them," Early says. "I'd like to create Keeper of the Dream Scholars for many years to come."

For the full story on The Dream, The Journey, The Legacy, including personal memories from Keeper of the Dream committee members, see the February 2002 issue of Inside OU.

For ticket or table sponsorship information, contact Tamara Lund at (248) 370-4915 or lund@oakland.edu.

Historical information on the Keeper of the Dream can be found on the [Office of Equity](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

On Feb. 20, Oakland University will celebrate the 10th anniversary of one of the most successful, inspiring and influential programs ever created on campus - the Keeper of the Dream Scholarship Awards Banquet.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Thursday, January 24, 2002
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Thursday, January 24, 2002
Article Start Date: Wednesday, November 12, 2003