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Winners announced for state MLK awards

Annual Commemorative Celebration Jan. 12 in downtown Columbus

COLUMBUS (Jan. 5, 2017) — Seven Ohio individuals and organizations will be recognized for their efforts to advance nonviolent social change at the 32nd annual Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration. The free event, sponsored by the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission, will be held at noon Thursday, Jan. 12 at Trinity Episcopal Church, 125 E. Broad St., Columbus.

The annual event also will feature speeches from the following winners of the 2016 Statewide MLK Oratorical Contest held last April: Elena Earley, now a third-grader, Columbus; Mackenzie Lewis (who also is receiving the Governor's Humanitarian Award), now a fifth-grader, Columbus; Playon Patrick, now a ninth-grader, Columbus; and Ivy Holley, now a 10th-grader, Lima.

The awards and their recipients are as follows:

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: 10-year-old Mackenzie Lewis, Columbus. Concern over the Flint, Mich., water crisis sprang Lewis into action last year. She spent hours planning and executing drives and a fundraiser to collect safe water and other supplies for the people of Flint. In two trips, she delivered 1,330 cases and 320 gallons of water. Lewis' other initiatives include collecting more than 200 T-shirts for children in Haiti and more than 150 stuffed animals for her Berwick Cares Bear Project at her school, Berwick Alternative K-8 in Columbus, for children going to foster or adoptive homes.

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 his efforts to successfully bring people from diverse backgrounds together to build a better community.*

Winner: Wayne McLaughlin, Chillicothe, has dedicated his life to the service of others. Professionally, he recently retired from serving as executive director of Ross County Community Action, a social service delivery agency in Chillicothe. During his 11-year tenure, McLaughlin was diligent in securing funding for the development of a homeless shelter for men; he implemented a support program for individuals with lupus; collaborated with Chillicothe City School District to bring a minority student leadership program to Ross County; and partnered with Ohio University-Chillicothe to enhance the Head Start program for children. Relative to the

community, McLaughlin is an ordained minister who has been active in the prison ministry. He has been instrumental in the Chillicothe-area Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebrations, Black History Month celebrations and health events for minorities. In addition, he has served on more than 20 boards, commissions and other organizations.

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: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Lima. During the past 26 years, the Sigma Mu Omega chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority has served the Lima community in numerous ways. A non-profit international service organization, AKA is the oldest Greek letter sorority for African American women in the United States. The Lima chapter provides a college readiness program for students. They also host the largest MLK breakfast in Lima with 500 to 700 attendees, where they raise funds for programming and scholarships. Other projects include giving bags of food to youth for weekend meals and serving as reading buddies.

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: JumpStart, Inc., Cleveland, is a venture development organization making many positive contributions to improve the quality of life for citizens in economically challenged areas. JumpStart and its partners in northeast Ohio have helped more than 1,150 early-stage entrepreneurs raise more than \$2 billion in risk capital, generate more than \$1.7 billion in revenue and create more than 10,000 total jobs. The organization also was the first major venture development organization to launch a fund specifically for minority and female entrepreneurs. JumpStart's pioneering efforts to focus on traditionally underserved communities has achieved international recognition, and now serves as a model for other communities to leverage investments for economic revitalization. In addition, JumpStart leadership has helped spearhead national efforts to increase diversity in the venture capital investing community.

Educational Excellence Award criteria: *The recipient selected in this category recognizes the personal commitment and example that Dr. 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: Jill Ackerman, Lima, has spent her entire 29-year education career dedicated to the Lima City Schools, where she has served as superintendent since 2012. Ackerman has a strong dedication to helping students succeed inside and outside of the classroom. For example,

Ackerman was instrumental in bringing the Closing the Achievement Gap program to Lima. The program helps at-risk students move in the right direction and toward graduation through various activities and adult mentors. The program was initially implemented for African American male high school students, but the success of the program resulted in it expanding to females and then middle school students because Ackerman and her team saw the need to intervene at an earlier age. The program has led to improved grades, confidence, attendance and behavior.

Health Equity and Awareness Award criteria: *The recipient selected in this category offers exemplary community outreach and educational programs that serve an underserved population in the state. These services increase the accessibility of health care for the under-served while providing a high quality of customer service.*

Winner: Katie Potter, Brook Park, is the manager of the women's house of the Ed Keating Center located in Brook Park. The Ed Keating Center, headquartered in Lakewood, provides recovering alcoholic and drug-addicted men and women a chance for sober living. Potter provides guidance and support to residents while also maintaining order and accountability for the business side of the house. She also embraces empathy without enabling destructive behavior. Potter also provides support for relatives who need help understanding how to live with an afflicted alcoholic/addict. She is on call 24/7 and maintains the same open-door policy for alumnae and community members.

Social Justice Award criteria: *The recipient selected in this category has made significant contributions to achieving justice for individuals or communities, including contributions made through the legal, legislative and governmental systems as they apply to the more vulnerable elements of our society.*

Winner: Phillip Morton, Lima, is the past chair of the Lima affiliate of the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice. A goal of the organization is to achieve equal justice for blacks and other minorities. Members include criminal justice professionals and students as well as community leaders. Under Morton's leadership, the Lima affiliate raised money for college scholarships for students studying criminal justice and other related fields. Members also have adopted a school where they tutor and mentor students. The affiliate also has supported many community programs, including crime victim services, Salvation Army and Family Promise, an organization helping homeless and low-income families.

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/mlk.