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State MLK Commission seeks nominations for awards *Deadline is Sept. 30*

COLUMBUS (Aug. 17, 2016) — Nominations are being sought for awards honoring Ohioans who carry on the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Awards honoring such individuals and organizations will be given at the 2017 Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration being held Jan. 12, 2017, at Trinity Episcopal Church in downtown Columbus.

The award ceremony is sponsored by the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission, which is housed within the Equal Opportunity Division of the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS).

Nominations are due to the commission by Sept. 30.

The awards and their criteria are as follows:

Governor's Humanitarian Award: Nominees must be individuals who act independently of associations and organizations. These individuals give their time freely to those in need without question and often without recognition. This award honors quiet soldiers who promote the welfare of humanity and the elimination of pain and suffering through their own selfless service, and demonstrate a personal activism that has led them to render unheralded long-term service to the community.

Community Building Award: Nominees must be individuals or organizations who have made significant contributions toward building a sense of unity among Ohio citizens. Nominees must have demonstrated the ability to build safer communities through various area revitalization activities and programs. Nominators must demonstrate how the nominee has used Dr. King's vision of nonviolent social change to successfully bring people from diverse backgrounds together to build a better community.

Cultural Awareness Award: Nominees must demonstrate an appreciation for diversity and skill in building and maintaining harmonious cross-cultural relationships. Nominators should identify specific initiatives and accomplishments that foster Dr. King's vision of unity among people of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Economic Opportunity Award: Nominees, which may be individuals, municipalities, businesses or other organizations, must seek to improve the quality of life for citizens in economically challenged areas through economic incentive programs. Nominees must demonstrate accomplishments in one or more of the following areas: workforce training 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 the ability to take advantage of state and federal aid to provide economic opportunity.

Educational Excellence Award: Nominees in this category must have demonstrated a personal commitment to scholarship and/or attainment of educational goals despite significant barriers or obstacles. Nominees must have successfully achieved progress in eradicating systemic barriers that impede the attainment of academic excellence. The activities/programs of the nominees could include mentoring, tutoring, innovative pre-school programs, highly effective pre-college programs or the provision of scholarships, etc. Nominees must show a commitment to Dr. King's dream of social justice for all Americans through the provision/use of equal access to the means/resources of learning and the full utilization of educational opportunities.

Health Equity and Awareness Award: Nominees must have offered exemplary community outreach and educational programs for an under-served population in the state. These services should increase the accessibility (e.g., awareness, cost, transportation) of health care for the under-served while providing a high quality of customer service. Critical issues in achieving health equity and awareness can include provisions for drug treatment, HIV testing, screenings, prescription programs for the uninsured/underinsured, prenatal care and pediatric care. Organizations that provide health care and entities that facilitate health care delivery services are eligible to participate in this category. Nominations must document the support of services that progress toward the realization of Dr. King's vision of an America that provides the real promise and fulfillment of hope for the poor.

Social Justice Award: Nominees must have made significant contributions to achieving justice for individuals or communities. Nominees have made contributions through the legal, legislative and governmental systems on behalf of society's more vulnerable populations. The nominees must have participated in activities that embrace Dr. King's commitment to nonviolence while fostering social justice.

Youth: Capturing the Vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award: Nominees must be younger than age 21 on Sept. 30, 2016, and demonstrate an adherence to one or more of Dr. King's Six Principles of Nonviolence: "Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people; the Beloved Community is the framework for the future; attack forces of evil, not persons doing evil; accept suffering without retaliation for the sake of the cause to achieve the goal; avoid internal violence of the spirit as well as external physical violence; and, the universe is on the side of justice."

For more information and a nomination form, visit das.ohio.gov/mlk or contact Bobbi Bell of the DAS Equal Opportunity Division at 614-466-8380 or mlk@das.ohio.gov.