Commemorative event highlights MLK legacy

COLUMBUS (Jan. 17, 2019) — Lt. Gov. Jon Husted was the featured speaker today at the 34th annual Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration, held at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Columbus. The event was sponsored by the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission.

“Dr. King knew that one of the things the world needs most is for all of us to gain a greater understanding of the people around us – the struggles, challenges, and realities that we all face every day in our lives,” the Lt. Governor said. “One thing I admire most about him was his ability to help people grasp that concept and to convince others that until we gained that greater understanding, America could not live up to its potential and its promise,” Lt. Gov. Husted said.

Also at the event, the lieutenant governor and members of the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission presented the following awards:

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

**Winner: Michael Douglas, Chesterland**, founded Diversity Initiatives, Inc. in 1998 to help public and private organizations advance positive interaction and communication across racial, cultural, socio-economic and gender-based boundaries. He has consulted with many companies and school districts and serves as chief diversity officer for Walsh University.

**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: Toledo Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club, Inc., Toledo**, conducts many community service projects and workshops for local youth and presents educational presentations about the heritage and history of the Buffalo Soldiers. The motorcycle club is named for the historic African-American U.S. Army regiments nicknamed “Buffalo Soldiers” by Native Americans who encountered the service members on the battlefield. One of the most impactful programs the Toledo club is involved in is a presentation for youth explaining how to react if they are stopped by the police. They also provide mentoring and information about respecting oneself and others. Other projects include adopting a local park and raising funds to pay swimming pool fees for area children.

**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: Pastor Michael E. Carter, Jr., Toledo. His ministries at the Praise City Worship Centers in Toledo and Detroit where he pastors include operating a food pantry and providing free meals for youth during the summer and free food for basketball program participants. The centers hold clothing and toy giveaways. Carter also leads several small groups, including parenting classes, fatherhood classes, peer mentoring, youth mentoring and a youth leadership initiative with millennials in ministry and business. He also leads a free GED program, and provides job training and soft skills training.

Health Equity and Awareness Award criteria: The recipients selected in this category offer exemplary community outreach and educational programs that serve an underserved population in the state. These services increase the accessibility of health care for the underserved while providing a high quality of customer service. (There are two winners.)

Winner: Dr. Darrell Gray II, Columbus, is a gastroenterologist serving as an assistant professor at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and The James Cancer Hospital where he also serves as the deputy director of the Center for Cancer Health Equity. At OSU he engineered the Provider and Community Engagement (PACE) Program for Health Equity in Colorectal Cancer Prevention, a comprehensive colorectal cancer awareness and screening program which has been recognized nationally by the American College of Gastroenterology and National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable. He also chairs the Health Equity Steering Committee at OSU, assists in the implementation of Health Sciences Academies in Columbus City Schools, serves on the board of Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services and is an ambassador for #BlackMeninMedicine.

Winner: Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Lucas County, Toledo, is a leader of diversity and health equity in Lucas County. The board has funded educational partners and grass roots organizations, and has provided direct access for mental health and recovery services for those who are marginalized in the local community. The board has demonstrated its vision of creating a compassionate community that embraces recovery and mental wellness through enabling community organizations to provide services in underserved communities in Lucas County. The board also is committed to ensuring the voice of the disenfranchised is heard by including consumers in key areas of decision making and by developing a position for a director of health equity. The board is an instrumental part of the current conversation in Lucas County as it relates to addressing matters of inclusion, diversity and health equity.

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: Vincent Edwards, Jr., Cincinnati, has made many positive contributions to the community. He works as a victim advocate for the Hamilton County Prosecutor’s Office. In his spare time, he wrote a children’s book, One Face/One Race, that explains to children that even though people may look different on the outside, on the inside everyone is created equal. He visits schools where he engages children while reading the book to get them to discuss these important issues.
Youth: Capturing the Vision of Dr. King Award criteria: The recipient exemplifies leadership, nonviolence and commitment to excellence and interracial cooperation as well as adherence to one or more of Dr. King’s Six Principles of Nonviolence.

Winner: Groomed for Greatness, Toledo, is a nonprofit organization serving girls ages 4 to 17. Its mission is to enhance the lives of girls through professional and personal research-based programming that equips them with the necessary skills to be leaders. Programming includes a diversity forum that exposes participating girls to other cultures while helping them to discover who they are and how they can become productive citizens. The girls also are taught how to take active leadership roles and be voices against injustice and oppression in their community.

The event concluded with presentations from the four winners of the 2018 Statewide MLK Oratorical Contest held in Columbus last April. The young orators included third-grader Jaxson Edwards of Akron; fifth-grader Adonia Balqis and seventh-grader Mackenzie Lewis, both of Columbus; and high school senior Quinica Garrett of Cleveland.

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.