Cincinnati’s MORTAR to receive MLK Commission award

COLUMBUS — Governor Mike DeWine will join the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission Thursday to recognize Cincinnati’s MORTAR Entrepreneurship Hub during its 35th annual Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration. MORTAR will receive the commission’s Economic Opportunity Award, which recognizes individuals, municipalities, businesses or other organizations that seek to improve the quality of life for citizens in economically challenged areas through economic incentive programs.

MORTAR will join six individuals who also will be honored during the noon ceremony at Trinity Episcopal Church in Columbus for their work to serve others and lift the oppressed in communities across Ohio.

“These Ohioans reflect a life similar to that of Dr. King’s, filled with a passion to create positive changes within their communities,” said Ohio Governor Mike DeWine. “Each of these awardees selflessly serve others and continue to make Ohio a great state.”

The 12-member commission advocates Dr. King’s principles of nonviolent change and the pursuit of racial, social and economic justice, and annually hosts the award ceremony in January leading up to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

“These outstanding Ohioans remind us that Dr. King’s dream of inclusion, social justice and service to the common good remains alive and is flourishing in communities across the state,” said Will Lucas, chair of the commission. “They are an inspiration to us all to join our neighbors in continuing to spread Dr. King’s message of equality for generations to come.”

MORTAR, a nonprofit resource hub for urban entrepreneurs, has been working since 2014 to create diverse communities by providing historically marginalized entrepreneurs access to resources to build or expand their dream business. Resources include its 15-week MORTAR Entrepreneurship Academy from which nearly 300 have graduated.

The nomination stated MORTAR’S presence in Cincinnati has contributed to increased minority business ownership, job creation, and a flourishing local economy — primarily in the rapidly developing Over-The-Rhine and Walnut Hills areas.

“MORTAR’s program also has a ripple effect in surrounding areas, serving as a magnet that draws in entrepreneurial students from all around Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. By targeting underserved and redeveloping communities, MORTAR enables non-traditional, underrepresented entrepreneurs to use their inherent talents to improve economic development in their neighborhoods and positively
participate in the rise of Cincinnati. Through education, guidance and mentorship, MORTAR is effectively challenging and changing perceptions around how entrepreneurs are built and what their legacies will become."

The Equal Opportunity Division of the Ohio Department of Administrative Services provides administrative support to the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission.

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