

FAMU ALUMNI RECOGNIZE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT BANQUET PRAISES BROWARD RESIDENTS

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Those who receive honors for their tireless community service are usually very modest about their recognition.

Take Betty Jordan of Fort Lauderdale. Recently honored by the Broward County Alumni Chapter of Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University (FAMU) in Tallahassee, Jordan said that she really didn't think that she deserved any recognition.

"I have worked with the preschool group at my church during the morning service and I'm involved in a tutoring program," she said when pressed for a reason that she was on the list of honorees at the chapter's Sixth Annual Scholarship Banquet held at the Signature Grand in Davie on March 28. "Oh, I also deliver meals on wheels," she remembered belatedly.

In fact, the retired school teacher's list of accomplishments extends to working with care givers, helping with the Angels of Hope organization, chairing a local Sickle Cell organization's membership committee, serving as a member of the Northwest Broward Democrat Club and local and national chapters of the NAACP and being active in the university's local alumni chapter.

"I'm only here tonight because David Nuby, Jr. and Sabrina Sapp-Kent (organizers of the banquet) don't understand the meaning of no," she told the audience as she was honored. "However, it's a memory I will always remember."

Others insisted that their recognition be shared by others. "I want every person here who is or has ever worked in education to stand up," requested Henry Brown III of Deerfield Beach as he received his honor. "My recognition is shared with each of these people," he said pointing to approximately a quarter of the crowd of nearly 300 who attended the event.

Brown was Broward County's Mathematics teacher of the year in 2002 and has been nominated or recognized as the teacher of the year at statewide and national levels. He was the first African-American male in the country to receive some of those recognitions.

Serving as the Assistant Principal at Hallandale Community Center, a school for at-risk youth, Brown is proud of those who have gone through the program and achieved high levels of success in their lives.

"We have some in college and others who are in vocational school, some are in the military and some own their own businesses," he said.

Helping troubled students to turn their lives around has not always been easy. "Students today want to be entertained, so a teacher has to work hard to make the classes interesting

and fun,” Brown explained. “You have to help them understand why they need to learn the material.”

Brown has been instrumental in developing a “Men and Women of Vision” program at the school. Through this effort students work to become role models for other students in the school and the community.

Some of the alumni association’s achievers overcame vast obstacles to reach their level of success. Cecil Hayes of Parkland is an interior designer in a profession where there are few black professionals. While she said that she “had to work hard to make it happen,” today Hayes has been recognized by Architectural Digest as one of the top 100 interior designers in the world.

“This award is more about the spirit of persistence,” Hayes said.

The awards are given each year at the association’s scholarship banquet, a fund-raising event that helps to provide around 15 scholarships a year to Broward County students entering FAMU.

“We do it to support the university, our youth and our community,” said John Wimberly Jr. of Fort Lauderdale, the Broward chapter’s president.

The local alumni chapter has given nearly \$100,000 in scholarship aid to local students Nuby during the last six years, Wimberly, said. The organization has given other gifts to the university, including a \$10,000 grant to the Law School.

Local honorees are selected for their support of FAMU and their service. “We have a strict selection process and honor them for their excellence in their profession and their contributions to the community in service,” explained Nuby, a resident of Dania.

Others recognized at the banquet were Harry B. Harrell and Gary Torrence, co-owners and founders of Tom Jenkins Bar-B-Q restaurant, the Fort Lauderdale Chapter of The Links, Inc., a local service organization, The T. J. Reddick Bar Association, a private association of African American lawyers, Jasmin D. Shirley, Vice President of North Broward Hospital District and the Rev. Dr. Robert C. Stanley, Pastor of Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church.

Offering the banquet’s keynote address, FAMU president Dr. Fred Gainous, Jr. reminded the audience that many of them received an education and went on to success because FAMU accepted them into college when other universities would not.

“It is God’s plan to educate his people,” he said. “We welcome students that other universities said no to. We accept students who have ability and need a little encouragement.”

FAMU currently enrolls 12,500 students and has more than 700 faculty members.

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