Senior Grand Warden Williams commented “this was a very good event and all of the honorees were well deserving... these are the things that Masons should be doing in the community.”

Ecclesiastes Lodge #120 helps youths pursue higher education

Ecclesiastes Lodge #120, a Prince Hall Masonic lodge of Greater Cleveland, hosted their inaugural “Making a Difference” Scholarship Luncheon last month at the Doubletree Hotel. The mission and aim for the affair was to raise awareness of the absolute need of promoting higher education in our community, to further promote participation in the lives of young people, and to strengthen the visibility of Ecclesiastes Lodge #120 and the Greater Cleveland Prince Hall Masonic Family.

The aims of the “Making a Difference” initiative centered and built upon the core principles of Freemasonry which are brotherly love, relief, and truth. As a direct union between the core principles of Masonry and the aims of this initiative, this scholarship program was born.

In an effort to increase service, reclaim past practices, and become more visible in the community the lodge’s theme in 2012 is ‘Building on Tradition while challenging the future through commitment, accountability, responsibility, and leadership’ which the committee echoed throughout the selection process.

There were a significant number of meritorious applications that were received during this initial campaign. The “Making a Difference” committee consisting of Chairman Tony J. Dye, Damon Johnson, Quinton Turpin, Ed Long, Anthony Peebles, and Worshipful Master James L. Robinson Jr. recognized four local seniors whom exemplified the principles of “Making a Difference.”

The selected recipients were: Drekia Dixon (John Hay – Early College) who will be attending Bowling Green State University, DaVaughn Reid (Ginn Academy) who will matriculate to Ohio University, Jessica Sweeny (Charles Brush) who will be attending Cleveland State University, and William Woods IV (Shaw High School) who will attend Kent State University.

“These students are remarkable. Each selected based upon their strong academic record, their clear servant leadership in extracurricular and volunteer activities, and their vision of dedication to the pursuit of ‘Making a Difference,’” said Robinson.

“There is no scholarship without the pressing or exceeding of limits and there is no difference without change… Learn from the Past, Watch the Present, and Create the Future. When you do these things, you will never regret training hard come race day.”

These were the hallowed words of the Ecclesiastes Lodge #120 Scholarship Committee Chairman (Junior Warden) Tony J. Dye when addressing the audience during the luncheon.

Rev. Hilton O. Smith, senior vice president for Corporate and Community Affairs at Turner Construction Company and associate minister at the Greater Abyssinia Baptist Church, was the keynote speaker.

Prester Pickett, assistant to the director of Black Studies at Cleveland State University, was the

master of ceremony. Pickett challenged and charged the students to be great in their missions and provided excellent analogies that eloquently framed the premise of what obtaining a college education means to not only themselves but for the greater community.

Smith provided additional words of encouragement to the youth: to be thankful for the adults in their lives, to keep God first, to always keep their priorities in order, and to have fun along the way. He also charged them with being humble, being steadfast, and being a beacon of light that duly shines.

The words of Smith electrified the room where he received a standing ovation upon his departure from the podium. Ecclesiastes Lodge #120 provided approximately $2000 in financial assistance to the honored recipients of the inaugural “Making a Difference” Scholarship Luncheon.

In addition to honoring the students, the men of Ecclesiastes Lodge #120 looked into the community to award a person who actively participates in the community and the lives of our children with the 2012 “Making a Difference” Humanitarian Award.

This year’s recipient was Hilton O. Smith.

“Rev. Smith has been an excellent example for all in both the professional and public arena,” said Past Master Damon Johnson, who presented Smith with his personalized award.

Several top dignitaries of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio such as Senior Grand Warden, Carl A. Williams, Grand Lodge Trustee RW Leo C. Beavers, and RW Deputy Grand Lecture (7th Masonic District), Melvin L. Russell were in attendance.

The Grand Worthy Matron, Beverly J. Beavers, of the Amaranth Grand Chapter of the Order of the Easter Star - PHA State of Ohio along with Grand Associate Patron Arnet Sanders were also in attendance.

Senior Grand Warden Williams commented “this was a very good event and all of the honorees were well deserving... these are the things that Masons should be doing in the community.”

“This was an amazing affair. The smiles on the faces of the students and the families were priceless. Ecclesiastes Lodge #120, Prince Hall Masons (and Freemasons in general), do a lot of great work in the community. It was powerful to see an august body of African American men supporting the youth in words, actions, and deed. This is something the greater community needs to see and something that in many lives of today’s youths are missing. For an inaugural affair, it was great. It makes me anxiously look forward to what future years may bring” said, Cheryl Johnson, an attendee of the event.

Ecclesiastes Lodge #120 is a subordinate lodge of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio where the Honorable Johnny O. Pitts Sr. presides as the Most Worshipful Grand Master. It was founded on November 12, 1961 and is currently celebrating 50 year in existence. Feel free to visit the website to learn more about Ecclesiastes Lodge#120, and their programs www.ecc120.com.