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By JUDITH LYNN LEE
Staff Writer

Scholarships have changed the face of college campuses across America, adding students who had at one time only dreamed of attending a university to the mix. Companies, organizations, and individuals who sponsor scholarships continue to look for potential in younger generations.

On Sunday, June 10, 2012, at the Tangier Restaurant, Akron National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) held their Annual Life Membership/Scholarship Buffet Luncheon.

Twenty-six high school seniors along with college undergraduates were awarded scholarships.

Receiving the higher of the scholarships was Sean Mendoza who was recipient of a full-ride scholarship to Kent State University. The Firestone High School graduate said he plan to major in business management.

Rev. Vincent E. Peterson told those attending, “We are so quick to criticize kids when they do something wrong. If you’re going to be quick to criticize then be quick to applaud them when they are doing something positive. Get up and applaud these kids like they are your own.”

The audience obliged with a standing ovation.

Peterson, who is pastor of Providence Baptist Church in Akron, gave the keynote address. He stated in his motivational message, “When you pat young people on the back, when you encourage them, you get something out of it.”

Peterson, who once played football at Youngstown State University for coach Jim Tressel, shared that Tressel’s model was to never do anything half-way. He told scholarship recipients, “You will be moving to a new level in your life so you must understand that you have a duty, not only to yourself but to what your mommy and daddy have taught you. They did not invest in you for you to go out and do your own thing.”

He also advised the winners to watch out in college for what he called, “double agents,” people who pose as friends but don’t have their best interest at heart. Peterson said, “Those are the folks who say they’ve got your backs. They’re not there to help you, but they are there to divert you from the task that God has called you to do.”

Peterson’s final message to the students was to stay away from those who want to party all the time rather than studying. “They don’t want you to succeed because they know they’re not going to succeed,” Peterson said.

Those awarded scholarships were Gifty Amadu, Nicholas A. Baker IV, Rebecca Barnes-Felton, Ariss Bevly, William E. Blake, Teneisha Brown, Cynthia Burke, Cesily Carter, Erin Carter, Michael Clayton, Devyona Evans, Sekoria Finney, Sidney Finney and LaShae Foster.

Also receiving scholarships were Raymond Jefferies, Michael Jones, Quentin Monden, Leonard Oden, Alexandra Rogers, Sierrra Sharpe, Danielle Stokes, Dionna Stokes, Nina Strong and Nyesa Varner.

The scholarships and stipends varied in size from $200 to $1,000, depending on what school the student chose to attend.

Don Plusquellic also gave a message of hope. The Akron mayor stated that our job was to be mentors to our youths. “If we are to deal with the real problems of our youth, we must provide for them the education level they need to get a good job.”

He also told the NAACP audience, “No matter the color of their skin or where they live, they’ll go out and work in mainstream society and we’ll be proud of the vast majority of them instead of turning our backs on them.”

Those youth’s who will be representing Akron and Canton in the Afro Cultural Technological and Scientific Olympics (ACT-SO) competition were recognized. Amber Cobb (Vocal/Playwriting), Corey Lipkins Jr. (Dramatics/Poetry), Alexandra Rogers (Musical Performance) and Lovely Sumlin (Music Vocal).

These individuals will compete among other youths in ACT-SO during the NAACP National Convention July 5 through 7 in Houston, TX.

NAACP Life Memberships and Community Service Awards were also awarded to those who became members of the Civil Rights Organization and those who have exemplified great service to their community.

Ann Lane-Gates and Dr. Marvin King received Golden Heritage Life Membership Awards. Community Service Awards were presented to Rev. Vince Monden and Wesley Temple Church, First Merit Bank, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Mr. Phornell Burke, Summit Disabilities Serv., Henry’s Acme, Summa Health Systems, and Emma Smith.

U.S. Ambassador April Sutton and her 90 year old mother Serena Sutton were recognized for being pillars of their communities. Ambassador Sutton reminded youth’s that there will be

obstacles in life for many achievers.

“I was at the Grand Hotel when we got the word about Whitney Houston’s death. Here was a great woman who received many Grammy Awards, played in great movies and received recognition everywhere. There are pitfalls in this world so take your opportunities serious,” said Ambassador Sutton.

Mother Sutton said she remembers being a part of the NAACP even as a young child.

“It’s important that we keep our young children aware of this Civil Rights organization because it can be instrumental in their lives the way it was in mines.”

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Minister Peggy Holmes was glad to see that the NAACP continues presenting scholarships. The Hills Temple First Born Church stated, “I commend the NAACP for continuing to give scholarships and stipends to youths, especially with our economy the way it is.”

Averitt, who is also a member of the organizations’ state and national board, was instrumental in generating new NAACP Life Memberships during the evening program.

“It’s our job to keep this organization going with new memberships. The organization would not have its longevity without it,” said Averitt.