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THE BRONX'S INDEPENDENT VOICE!

Clinton Honors Community Leaders

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President Bill Clinton with 2010 Honoree Mary McKinney

Congressman Joseph Crowley hosted a Black History Month commemoration honoring local community leaders with special guest and keynote speaker President Bill Clinton, founder of the William J. Clinton Foundation and 42nd President of the United States. The theme for the 11th annual event was: “Celebrating Service: Giving Back to New York and the World.”

More than 1,000 people were at the Dreiser Loop Auditorium to hear President Bill Clinton speak about the importance of charity and helping others. Four outstanding local leaders were honored for their community work: Assemblyman Carl Heastie, Soundview community activist Mary McKinney, and Truman High School students David Nnah and Zonya Williams.

“Every day brings a new opportunity to give back to our community – here in NYC and around the world. Tonight, we honored outstanding community leaders for their dedication to fight for those in need,” said Congressman Crowley. “We also paid tribute to President Clinton, whose lifelong dedication to public service and steadfast commitment to helping the underserved and disenfranchised is an inspiration to us all.”

Guests were inspired by remarks given by the special guest and keynote speaker. As the 42nd President of the United States, President Clinton presided over an unprecedented period of economic expansion. During his tenure, President Clinton reduced taxes for low-income families and working class-Americans, expanded subsidies through the Earned Income Tax Credit and made tax-cuts available to 90 percent of small businesses. Among numerous legislative victories, President Clinton signed the Brady Bill into law which imposes a 5-day waiting period on all hand-gun purchases to permit federal background checks and curb gun violence. Even after leaving office, President Clinton remains at the forefront of national and international issues and remains a steadfast champion for the underserved and disenfranchised. Notably, as the United Nations' special envoy to Haiti, President Clinton has worked to bring support, aid and comfort to a nation devastated by a tragic earthquake and incomprehensible loss.

Congressman Crowley continued, "When President Clinton spoke of the importance of community leadership through service, I know he was speaking of the great commitment shown by our four honorees and many others in the Bronx and Queens community. Tonight's honorees have demonstrated a tireless determination to improve their community, the lives of their neighbors and the world around us. We applaud Carl Heastie, Mary McKinney, David Nnah and Zonya Williams – they are true leaders whose work and achievements we proudly celebrate this year."

The evening's honorees have a lifetime of service in the community:

- The Honorable Carl Heastie, 83rd New York State Assembly District – has led the charge for nearly a decade to bring new schools to the Bronx and to improve housing, education, job training, and other vital services.
- Mary McKinney, Founding Member, Concerned Residents Organization (CRO) – organized community members across Soundview, the Bronx and NYC to improve the environment, health, and quality of life in our communities, and to ensure that residents have the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their neighborhoods. Under her leadership, CRO has grown to become a force for community activism throughout the city, providing support to groups on advocacy, grassroots training and organization.
- David Nnah, Senior, Truman High School – a top student in academics and civics, he was awarded a full academic scholarship by the Posse foundation, which identifies public high school students with extraordinary academic and leadership potential.
- Zonya Williams, Senior, Truman High School – a top student in academics and civics, she is a National Honor Society Member and received an outstanding community service award for her work in the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program.

Additionally, attendees were treated to performances by local Bronx talent including The Keltic Dream Dancers and the Co-op City Baptist Church Choir. The invocation was led by Rev. Sheldon E. Williams, Co-op City Baptist Church, and the benediction by Rev. Dr. Robert A. Smith Jr., Church of the Savior.

Congressman Crowley is currently serving his 6th term representing New York's 7th Congressional District, the most ethnically diverse community in the United States. He has hosted the Annual Black History Month event since 2000. As the Chief Deputy Whip, Congressman Crowley is the highest-ranking New York member in the leadership of the House Democratic Caucus and sits on the prestigious House Committee on Ways and Means and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.