



Arlene and James Henson, Col. Ethel Underwood and Lynwood Campbell.



Vice Mayor Kerry Donley, Paul Friedman and Dak Hardwick.



NAACP Alexandria president John Chapman, Mayor Bill Euille and NBC 4's John Schriffen.

PHOTOS BY JEANNE THEISMANN/GAZETTE PACKET

'Affirming America's Promise'

NAACP honors community service.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

On the day the memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was dedicated in Washington, the Alexandria branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People honored local members for their service and paused to remember the inspiration of the slain civil rights leader.

"Who could not be inspired by the life of Dr. Martin Luther King or the words we heard today from our President?" said keynote speaker Lonnie G. Bunch III, the founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. "No matter the color of our skin, we have all been touched in profound ways by the history of the African American experience."

More than 300 people turned out for the 78th annual awards dinner, held Oct. 16 at the Mark Center Hilton. With a theme of "Affirming America's Promise," the local branch honored several members for their service to the NAACP, including longtime resident Laverne Chatman-Brown.

"For 54 years, I have lived here," said Chatman-Brown, who was recognized with the Lifetime Service Award. "My schools are here, my church is here. It is I who needs to thank you for allowing me to serve."

NAACP Alexandria branch president John T. Chapman presented Jennifer Lightfoot with the Presidential Award, and Felicia Sharpe Parks and members of the Nu Xi Zeta chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority were named Community Service Award winners. Nia Pipes, a 2011 graduate of T.C. Williams High School, was the Annie B. Rose Scholarship recipient.

"The story of black America is one of power and inspiration," Bunch said in his address. "I am in awe of our slave ancestors. People will remember that they were sold, not that they were brave. But in spite of the cruelty, they maintained dignity."

On behalf of the Alexandria branch of the NAACP, Chapman presented Bunch with a donation to the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

"We are in danger of forgetting the importance of our history," Bunch said. "But you can tell a country by its museums — by what it deems important to remember."

For information on the Alexandria branch of the NAACP, call 703-684-6190 or visit www.naacpalexandriava.org.



John Chapman presents the NAACP Lifetime Service Award to Lavern Chatman-Brown.



Jennifer Lightfoot receives the NAACP Presidential Award from John Chapman.



Lonnie Bunch, founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, delivers the keynote address at the NAACP Awards dinner Oct. 16 at the Mark Center Hilton.



Gwen Lewis, Lynwood Campbell and Geri Baldwin.



Members of the Nu Xi Zeta chapter of Zeta Phi Beta sorority receive the Community Service Award from NAACP chapter president John Chapman.



Members of the T.C. Williams choir sing the National Anthem at the Oct. 16 NAACP Awards dinner.