

## **More than 260 honor King's mission, legacy at Community Celebration**

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/31497/more-than-260-honor-kings-mission-legacy-at-community-celebration/>

Sara Morehouse may still be in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Oshkosh's Carl Traeger Elementary School. But, already, she clearly understands the message and mission of a man who would become known as one of the nation's and world's greatest advocates for social justice.

"All in all, I have a dream... similar to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, that everyone, no matter your race, interests, personality and other traits, will be fully accepted, treated fairly and cared for just as anyone else," Morehouse states in her award-winning essay honored at the Jan. 20 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Community Celebration at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. "We should not live in a society where there is a dominant race, or gender, or anything."

Morehouse and nearly 270 other Oshkosh and UW Oshkosh community members gathered Community Celebration in Reeve Memorial Union, another program to honor one of the nation's greatest civil rights leaders and social justice visionaries. Morehouse's 1<sup>st</sup> place essay was one of nine authored by Oshkosh area K-12 students that shared the spotlight with individuals and organizations working daily to typify King's dream.

Jason Turner, Associate Pastor of the Christian Faith Fellowship Church, and president of Dominion Bible College in Milwaukee, gave the keynote address at the Community Celebration. The Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church Choir of Milwaukee provided a special musical performance for the evening.

### **Students, organizations, community partners honored**

The celebration also featured award presentations to UW Oshkosh students, community organizations and other leaders helping advance King's vision for a more inclusive and just society.

While plans had called for one, inaugural African-American Student Leadership Award to be announced and bestowed, the quality of the applications for the UW Oshkosh student scholarship prompted its sponsors to award two scholarships.

The award is given out each year in honor of the "Oshkosh 94," the students who, in a Nov. 21, 1968 campus protest that would come to be known as "Black Thursday," demanded the then-UW Oshkosh administration to hire more black faculty members, infuse curricula with more black history and cultural offerings and help establish an African-American cultural center on campus. Students occupied Chancellor Roger Guiles office. Ninety were expelled and four others were suspended.

Full-time, African-American undergraduate students at UW Oshkosh who are earning a 2.5 GPA or higher can apply for the award. The Oshkosh 94 members who helped select the first award winner were

so impressed with two of the applications, they opted to fund and grant a second \$500 scholarship in award's first year, UW Oshkosh Department of History Prof. Stephen Kercher announced at the Martin Luther King Community Celebration.

Student Shariah Salahaladyn was selected as the award winner, and student Laureine George-Pratt also earned the additional honor.

“I felt definitely blessed and honored for that fact,” said George-Pratt, a UW Oshkosh senior who is originally from Sierra Leone but has lived in Madison for last several years. “Working with multicultural students myself, helping to recruit more multicultural students to the University, I guess I had that passion within me.”

UW Oshkosh Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Lane Earns earned the first Honorable Diversity Award during the Community Celebration, presented by the Office of Academic Support and Inclusive Excellence.

Sue Panek, Executive Director of the Oshkosh Area United Way, recognized “Honored Service Organizations” in the community, including: Goodwill Industries International Inc.; Habitat for Oshkosh International, Inc.; Lakeside Packaging Plus, Inc.; Oshkosh Civility Project; and World Relief Fox Valley.

Oshkosh Area School District teachers Sarah Sprangers, of Carl Traeger Elementary, Carree VanOss of Carl Traeger Middle School, and Gene Pollack of Oshkosh North High School, were also recognized during the Community Celebration for their support of the essay contest. Participating schools were awarded a special stipend to support teachers’ professional development “and as a thank you for promoting the legacy of Dr. King.”