

6 women, organization to receive 2012 Fannie Lou Hamer Awards

Carl O. Snowden, chairman of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee, Inc., has announced that six women and an organization have been selected to receive the prestigious Fannie Lou Hamer Awards during a ceremony at 4 p.m. Oct. 7 at St. John's College's Francis Key Auditorium, 60 College Ave., Annapolis.

The 17th Annual Fannie Lou Hamer Reception and Award's program honors women from various racial backgrounds, who in the opinion of the Dr. Martin Luther King Committee have demonstrated a propensity for social justice.

This annual reception is the only reception in the State of Maryland that celebrates the birthday of the late Hamer, who won national acclaim after making a passionate speech before the 1964 National Democratic Convention.

In that speech before the convention, Hamer described in graphic details the efforts that were taken to deny her and other African Americans the right to vote. Her graphic description before a national television audience of a beating that was imposed on her was the catalyst for the U.S. Congress to pass the 1965 Voting Rights Act that led to more African Americans and women being elected to public office.

Hamer was born in Ru-leville, Miss., and unlike many of her famous contemporaries, Malcolm X., Coretta Scott King, Rosa Parks and Congressman John Lewis, Hamer is not a household name. However, the contribution that she made to the civil rights movement helped to literally change Amer-



CAGE LEWIS



CUFFMAN



DURANT



HICKS BOYD



REMILLARD



STALLINGS



Courtesy photo

Seeds 4 Success is a program launched by the Eastport Girls Club. Its mission is to foster success for low-income families and children by securing services that help ensure youths and families achieve their full potential. Included on its Board of Directors are, back row, from left: Jean McCoy, treasurer; Helena Hunter, president; and Karen Feldman, vice president. Hunter and Feldman are founders of the club. Front row: Education Director Valerie Drozd with two club members.

ican politics and how people are elected to public office.

"Fannie Lou Hamer represents the thousands of non-descript men and women who made it possible for all Americans to enjoy the voting privileges, they have today," said Snowden. He further stated, "We selected recipients of the Fannie Lou Hamer awards who are not household names, because like the late Mrs. Hamer they are making a difference in the lives of the people they serve. We are very proud of these recipients."

Ironically, decades after Hamer and civil rights leaders were successful in having past the historic 1965 Voting Rights Act, all across the nation complaints have been lodged alleging that the states of Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania and others are attempting to suppress the black vote.

In the State of Maryland this year, the state prosecutor successfully prosecuted a number of suppression of voting rights cases in Maryland. "If ever there was a time that Marylanders needed to know who Mrs. Hamer was now is the time," said Snowden.

This year's recipients are Juanita Cage Lewis, who is the customer service manager and ombudsman for the Department of Housing and Community De-

velopment. She has received numerous citations and acknowledgments for her incredible achievements during her tenure with state government.

Bobbi Lyn Cuffman, who is a teacher assistant at Meade High School in Fort George G. Meade, worked with her daughter to create a program to serve homeless people in Anne Arundel County and Baltimore City.

Sandra Durant who also is a teacher has been in the field of education for almost a quarter of a century. She is a teacher at Herbron-Harmans Elementary School in Hanover. As a member of St. Mark United Methodist Church in Hanover, she started a successful backpack program for deserving students in her community.

Dr. Linda Hicks Boyd is a retired educator who is active in her sorority and seeks to increase voting participation among African Americans.

Ann Marie Remillard is a long-time political activist in Anne Arundel County politics. At the age of 80, she continues to be involved in her community. She has literally donated thousands of hours on behalf of Democratic candidates.

Sugar Stallings is a member of the West County Democratic Club and works to mobilize young people to become

involved in the electoral process through registering and voting.

This year, an organization called Seeds 4 Success has also been selected to receive an Hamer Award. Seeds 4 Success is an organization of women working with youth in Annapolis public and subsidized housing to improve reading and writing skills of participants.

Recipients who receive the Fannie Lou Hamer Awards are women from various racial backgrounds who either live and or work in Anne Arundel County. "While it is true that the Civil Rights Movement is still fighting to secure the right to vote, it is also true that one of the new civil rights issues of today is equity in education," said Snowden.

Proceeds from this event will go toward underwriting the 25th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Awards Dinner in January. The Fannie Lou Hamer Reception and Awards Ceremony is co-sponsored by St. John's College. Tickets are \$35 per person and may be obtained by calling 410-269-1524 or purchased the day of the event. Tax-deductible contributions may be sent to: MLK Committee, P.O. Box 371, Annapolis, MD. 21404.