

ECSU honors 2020 MLK recipients

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SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

WILLIMANTIC — A packed house at the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Distinguished Service Awards recently honored leaders within the Eastern Connecticut State University community.

The gathering late last month took place at ECSU’s J. Eugene Smith Library as staff, alumni and a student received the prestigious awards for their service to their communities.

The room was filled with inspiration as the recipients said their speeches and applause burst into the room, rapid-fire style.

The awards are designed to honor community members who have made a difference in their community the way King would have wanted.

The recipients were faculty winner Kristen Scavone, community service winner JoAnn Price and ECSU senior Lacey Brown.

Starasheemar Byrum, director of Arthur L. Johnson Unity Wing at ECSU, said the three recipients differ in what they have done to help with their communities.



Eastern Connecticut State University recently honored its 2020 MLK Award recipients. Pictured are, left, student Lacey Brown, an ECSU senior, and Kristen Scavone, director of the Eastern’s Office of AccessAbility Services. Community service winner JoAnn Price was unable to attend the event last month. Courtesy of ECSU

“Each recipient this year is unique,” Byrum said. “All of them reflect King’s legacy for showing empathy for people who are underserved.”

Joy Houlder, assistant to the ECSU Intercultural Center, stressed King’s bravery, which he showed until his death.

“Dr. King was committed to fighting for civil rights for all,” Houlder said. “Like

King, these people are examples showing courage.”

Scavone, who received her bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a master’s degree in counseling from Central Connecticut State University, received the faculty award for being an active LGBTQ and disabled advocate.

Scavone also works at Eastern’s Office of Access

Ability Services as its director since 2017.

Price, who was unable to attend the ceremony, received the Community Service Award for Courage in her Community for encouraging equality for all.

Price was a graduate from Howard University and served as a member of the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education.

Stacey Close, associate provost and vice president of equity and diversity, presented Price with her award and said King insisted on non-violent ways of protest.

“Dr. King led a peaceful army,” Close said. “He persisted on loving rather than fighting to make a point.”

Lacey Brown, a senior at ECSU and a Jamaican-American, received the Student Award.

She was recognized for her courage to fight for economic and social injustices.

Brown works for the Department of Wellness Education and Promotion at ECSU and helped combat food insecurity as well.

She also will work with the U.S. Peace Corps as a health specialist in West Africa.