



Eastern Connecticut State University

NEWS

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

For Immediate Release

Contact: Dwight Bachman

Public Relations Officer

(860) 465-5114 <Bachman@easternct.edu>

Ed Osborn, Director of University Relations

(860) 465-5043 <Osborne@easternct.edu>

Eastern Professor Wins Award

by LaToya M. Smith

Stacey Close, professor of history at Eastern Connecticut State University, was one of three area residents named recipients of the 2005 Collin Bennett-Marcus Garvey Community Awards. More than 230 people were on hand at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Hartford, CT on Nov. 5 to see the awards presented to Close; Maureen “Peaches” DaCosta, owner of Beauty Galore in Hartford; and Linda Johnston, a Connecticut State Trooper. The award honors the life and legacy of the late Reverend Collin Bennett, former pastor of St. Martin’s Episcopal Church, and Marcus Garvey, a prominent Jamaican advocate of Black Nationalism and economic independence for people of African descent.

Eastern President David G. Carter, the first African American president of a four-year institution of higher education in Connecticut, delivered the keynote address. His message, “Transcending Oneself for Others,” reflected his relationship with Bennett and left the crowd with a challenge. “I am honored to have known and to still be able to see the works of Mr. Bennett. He made a personal investment in youth by having high expectations. What concerns me today is that we are not caring. Something is wrong when our youth can remember all the words to a rock and roll song, but can’t add two

plus two. What legacy will we leave? This is an important event that allows us to reaffirm ourselves. It allows us to leave a legacy showing we transcended self.”

The award recipients, each exemplifying exceptional community involvement as they made positive changes in the lives of others, were gracious and kind in their remarks. Their dedication to their community epitomizes the progressive ideas of Garvey and Bennett.

Close serves as director of faculty development at Eastern. He also serves as a faculty representative on the Athletic Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Minority Recruitment and Retention Committee (MRRC). In addition, Close serves as the advisor for the University’s West Indian Club and Nubian Society. “I am honored and touched that the award committee took the time to highlight my work,” says Close.

Carter congratulated Close on his success and for being a role model at Eastern. “What makes me feel good about Dr. Close is that he requires excellence. As president of the University I want everyone at Eastern to strive for excellence. Dr. Close believes in challenging his students to reach their full potential. All too often students come to universities and don’t believe in themselves. They don’t focus on what they can become. But with Dr. Close, the impossible dream becomes a reality.”

The Collin Bennett-Marcus Garvey Award is given to individuals who exemplify the qualities of Marcus Garvey and the late Reverend Collin Bennett. The committee seeks individuals who encourage community involvement and economic empowerment within the African American community. The award honors all those who work in education, law, health, and those who work for community causes at the grassroots level.

(LaToya M. Smith is a senior majoring in Communication and History at Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic, CT.)

