

## The Catalyst Awards 2015 at The 224

On the last Friday evening in October, well over a hundred people gathered at The 224 Ecospace on Farmington Ave for the Catalyst Awards Celebration and Asylum Hill was very well represented. Not only was Yvonne Matthews the chair of AHNA one of the Honorees, but so was Diane Cantello, Vice President of Corporate Social Responsibility at The Hartford, Floyd Green, Vice President of Community Relations and Urban Marketing at Aetna, Rev. Matt Laney, Senior Minister at Asylum Hill Congregational Church, and Dr. Beth Shiavino-Narvaez, Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools.

The theme of this years awards was “Harvesting Hope”, and the Honorees were selected as transformational leaders who are harvesting hope in the fields where they have been planted.

The evening began with food and drink and a chance to mix with the many other leaders present that came to enjoy the evening and celebrate those chosen.



from left; Dr. Shiavino-Narvaez, Rev. Best, Rev. Laney, Mr. Green, Ms. Cantello, Ms. Matthews and Ms. Arrington – Mistress of Ceremonies

During the ceremony, which began with an invocation by the Reverend Dr. Shelley Best, each of the honorees was introduced by a chosen board member of The Conference of Churches and before receiving their award, spoke about Hope in their lives. Diane Cantello began by thanking her colleagues, The Hartford’s partners, and her family. She also Quoted Helen Keller saying “alone we can do so little, together we can do so much”, and then a Japanese writer who said “alone we are but a drop of water, together we are the ocean.”

Next up was Floyd Green, who after thanking his colleagues and partners spoke of the fear that sometimes causes us to self-edit our dreams. He shared a quote on his wall “if you have not tried and failed, you have not lived.” He then listed examples of famous people who were not stopped by fear including Oprah, Michael Jordan, Steve Jobs and Walt Disney. Mr. Green was followed by Rev. Matt Laney who thanked his fellow UCC members in attendance and then commented that for someone who “signed up to follow a transformational leader,” receiving an award for being one is a really humbling experience. He also spoke of resurrection as the “attitude of gratitude” and led all present to repeat several times “I am the Catalyst of Hope.”

Next Yvonne Matthews began with a quote from scripture and then thanked her fellow board members from AHNA, her mother Carol Matthews, along with her aunts and uncle, her spiritual mentors including her pastor and bishop, as well as Adrienne Cochrane the CEO of Urban League of Greater Hartford for her excellent example, and finally the AHNA community who has chosen her as chair.

The final honoree, Dr. Beth Schiavino-Narvaez began explaining that the photograph of a bumble bee on her desk is there to remind her that until recently scientists thought that it should be impossible for any creature with such a big body and such small wings to fly. She then spoke of her passion for ALL students to reach their full potential, despite the many who think this is impossible. For this reason she has set a goal of 100% college acceptance by 2020. She received her doctorate in Urban Superintendency from Harvard, and Hartford was the only Superintendents position that she applied for. She called it her “dream job,” and concluded by saying “We are our children’s opportunity and they are our hope.”

After the announcing of the winners of the silent auction, Rev. Best concluded with a benediction. It was indeed a very inspiring evening. More photos are available at <https://goo.gl/photos/Gar5TXXPtNXHytna9>