

NAACP recognizes 2 for community service

[STATE Edition]

St. Petersburg Times - St. Petersburg, Fla.
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Date: Jun 9, 1999
Start Page: 4
Section: NEIGHBORHOOD TIMES
Text Word Count: 358

Document Text

Police Chief Goliath Davis won the first Gemmer Award presented by the local chapter.

Two neighborhood leaders were among those honored Saturday by the St. Petersburg chapter of the NAACP.

Tee Lassiter, a self-described community activist and "servant for people," and Chrissun Cox, president of the Melrose-Mercy Neighborhood Association, were presented with community service awards by NAACP's longtime president, Garnelle Jenkins.

Lassiter was commended for her tenacious monitoring of City Council and her forthright opinions. She appeared shocked to receive the honor, which drew hearty congratulations from former ambassador to Australia Mel Sembler and members of his family, who sat at a table near the stage of the large banquet hall of the St. Petersburg Hilton. Betty Sembler, the ambassador's wife, was the evening's keynote speaker.

Mrs. Sembler, a fervent opponent of illegal drugs and founder of Straight Inc., a non-profit drug treatment program for young people, told Saturday evening's audience that children are "the nation's most important and precious resource."

Drug use, she said, is everyone's concern.

"We can't afford to be ambivalent," the mother and grandmother said.

Among those who heard Mrs. Sembler's speech were Mayor David Fischer, Florida Rep. Rudy Bradley, NAACP state conference president Leon Russell and Police Chief Goliath Davis.

Davis, who served as the evening's honorary co-chairman with council member Larry Williams, received the Rev. H. Robert Gemmer Award, the first time it has been presented. The award, the highest community service honor given by the local NAACP branch, is named after a St. Petersburg NAACP official and civil rights activist. After court-ordered busing to achieve racial integration of Pinellas County schools in 1971, Gemmer was instrumental in mapping out the plan for Pinellas County students. He died on Dec. 21, 1992.

Davis praised Fischer for "his vision for the inner city" and thanked the mayor for his confidence in him.

"You all should honor him," he told the audience.

Williams, who appeared almost overcome with emotion, told the audience that being honored by the NAACP was "the most overwhelming thing" that has ever happened to him outside of his family.

[Illustration]

Caption: Tee Lassiter; Goliath Davis; Photo: BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO, (2)

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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