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Shelia Cockrel Receives Crossroads of Michigan “Gift of Hope” Award

October 13, 2010, Detroit, MI - Crossroads of Michigan, hosted its annual fundraiser and award gala at the Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

“At Crossroads of Michigan, we like to say that we provide our clients with “a hand-up and the gift of hope,” says Mary Honsel, Crossroads Executive Director. “We learned, early on, that without hope, nothing else matters.”

Crossroads was honored to present Shelia Cockrel, formerly of the Detroit City Council, with the Heart of Crossroads 2010 Gift of Hope Award. Cockrel is well known for her commitment to those looking for help, hope and someone to care. Cockrel has made providing hope her personal mission and is devoted to the belief that one person can make a profound difference in the community and in the lives of its citizens.

During Crossroads’ move to its new Main Office location the potential risk of paying taxes not owed caused Crossroads to see counsel and assistance to help correct this error. Others could not or would not help, until Crossroads contacted Cockrel. She stepped in, did what needed to be done, and made a difference. The money Crossroads saved has been used for the purpose for which it was intended – ministering to the poor. “We will be forever grateful to Sheila Cockrel for her selfless donation of time and talent to Crossroads and those we serve,” said Honsel. In addition, Crossroads honored: Mr. Fred Conn (Crossroads Volunteer), “James A. McLaren” Award and Mr. Jerry Najor (Fraser Pharmacy), “Community Partner” award.

Crossroads of Michigan, founded in 1971, helps keep hope alive by providing emergency assistance, advocacy, a weekly soup kitchen and counseling to the neediest people in the metro area. Crossroads is able to help those in need at both of our Detroit locations at 2424 West Grand Boulevard and 14641 East Jefferson Avenue. Assisting young mothers, teens, the jobless, the elderly, the homeless, the infirm and those just released from Michigan prisons, Crossroads works with clients to meet their immediate needs and help them assess their situations to lessen the likelihood of future problems. Additional information on Crossroads and its award recipients can be found at www.crossroadsofmichigan.org

• SHEILA COCKREL •

Gift of Hope Award, 2010



At Crossroads, we like to say that we provide our clients with “a hand-up and the gift of hope.” We learned, early on, that without hope, nothing else matters. This is a belief shared by the other agencies and individuals that Crossroads calls on to partner with us as we serve our clients. One of these individuals is well known for her commitment to those looking for help, hope, and someone to care. Sheila Cockrel has made providing hope her personal mission. Her career, as well as her entire life, are devoted to the belief that one person can make a profound difference in the community and in the lives of its citizens. We are honored, tonight, to welcome Sheila Cockrel to Crossroads and present her with our Heart of Crossroads 2010 Gift of Hope Award.

Sheila came by her spirit of giving quite naturally. Born in Detroit to parents who were guided by the principles of voluntary poverty and devotion to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, Sheila's childhood home in Corktown was the St. Martha House of Hospitality, a shelter for homeless women and children. Additionally, her family, which also founded the Catholic Worker Movement in Detroit, oversaw the operations of a home for men and a year-round soup kitchen for the hungry. As a Wayne State University student, where she earned a B.A. and Master's in urban planning, she established the Ad-Hoc Action Group, a multi-racial, activist group that monitored police brutality in Detroit. After meeting her future husband, the legendary Ken Cockrel, Sr., they organized mass action against racist police misconduct and unjust practices in the criminal justice system. She continued working with her husband, managing his City Council campaign and overseeing his office and staff. The couple shared a vision of social justice and equity for all, until his untimely death, only three years after the birth of their daughter, Katherine, in 1985.

In 1993, Sheila Cockrel ran for and won a seat on the Detroit City Council, serving four terms in elected office. In her sixteen years of service on the Council, Sheila earned a reputation as someone who acted with integrity and stood accountable for her decisions. She quickly became known for her many notable accomplishments, working tirelessly on issues such as police misconduct and facilitating the passage of an ordinance requiring landlords to remove lead paint from properties that would house young families. In 2009, Sheila joined the adjunct faculty of Wayne State University's Irvin D. Reid Honors College where she teaches two seminars and holds a seat on the Board of Visitors. She recently established Crossroads Consulting Group (no relationship to Crossroads of Michigan), and she is Assistant Director of the Institute for Local Government at the University of Michigan Dearborn.

During the move of Crossroads' Main Office to our new address, we found ourselves in the middle of a property tax dispute with the city of Detroit. The potential to spend many thousands of dollars paying taxes we did not really owe pushed us to seek the counsel and assistance of those we believed could correct this error. Others would not or could not help us, until we contacted Sheila Cockrel. She stepped in, did what needed to be done, and made the difference. The money we saved has been used for the purpose for which it was intended – ministering to the poor. We will be forever grateful to Sheila Cockrel for her selfless donation of time and talent to Crossroads and those we serve. We are proud to name her the recipient of the Heart of Crossroads 2010 Gift of Hope Award.