

Celebrating Social Work Month

Local 371 honored members who received their MSW degrees in 2009 at its 26th Annual Social Work Month Celebration on March 12 at District Council 37. President Faye Moore and Executive VP Yolanda Pumarejo, the chair of the Union's Committee of Concerned Social Workers along with co-chairs Bernice A. Brown and Lucy Lane, welcomed the hundreds of members in attendance and recognized the dignitaries, including several DC 37 presidents.

The Keynote Speaker, Dr. Willie F. Tolliver, a renown author and educator at the Hunter College School of Social Work and the CUNY Graduate Center, inspired the audience with his remarks. "Social work is a field that attracts people with very big hearts. In many ways, the career chooses us."

Tolliver spoke about diversity, commitment to principles, and his roots in the South during segregation. "There is nothing I want so bad that I would give up who I am to get it," he stated to a round of applause from the audience. He made reference to the book he co-authored with Steve Burghardt, a Hunter colleague, called "Transformative Leadership in the Human Services: Why the Glass is Always Full." He said, "We wrote a book about people like you."

He then went through a list of do's and don'ts for social workers that will help to accomplish tasks. "Do for yourself what you seek to do for others," was the first tenet. "We put everybody else ahead of us, not only at work but in our families, too." Other tenets are: "Carry your vision with you," "Embrace diversity," and "Build community." Finally, he spoke about hope. "Hope must live with suffering. Let us plant fruit, even though we who plant it will never eat it."

Tolliver was followed by the McDonald's Gospel Choir's moving rendition of "This Little Light of Mine" and other inspirational songs. The evening concluded with Pumarejo awarding Local 371 Certificates of Recognition to the recent MSW graduates.



Photos by Terry Allen

