

Future leaders cultivate talents with United Way



Graduates of the 2010 African-American Leadership Development program were honored Thursday during a luncheon at the Hyatt Regency Rochester. The 19th graduating class of the program included 40 members.

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The United Way of Greater Rochester thanked 40 business and nonprofit employees on Thursday with its annual commencement luncheon for future community leaders.

The United Way was celebrating its 19th class of African-American leaders, educated and trained for the two weeks that their employers gave them off. The Rochester-area employees are taught the importance of volunteering, building expertise on issues to become advocates for improvement, and giving back to the community.

"This is not a once-and-out process," said Rodney Young, the United Way's coordinator for the



Alice Holloway Young, left, with former Rochester Mayor William Johnson, challenged program graduates on Thursday "to be a person of substance."

leadership program, after the luncheon, which drew more than 350 people to the Hyatt Regency Rochester.

Graduates of the program said they understood that, and some are

already planning to hone their skills and knowledge to improve the Rochester area. They came from numerous business and non-profits, including Time Warner Cable and the University of Rochester.

Natasha Chance, 23, was one of the younger graduates.

A Rochester native, Chance works for Verizon Wireless in Henrietta as a customer service representative. She recently finished her studies at SUNY Empire State College and plans to attend Harvard University Extension School to study environmental sustainability. She wants to pass that learning on to schools, which could save money implementing sustainability.

Chance said she wants to use her knowledge in the area. "My goal is to try to keep this in Rochester."

Young said the United Way begins each yearly program looking for 35 candidates. The

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candidates are interviewed and screened.

Young said the United Way itself focuses on issues of early childhood, school-age children, aging, crisis services and disability services.

"(Graduates) value giving back a service," said Young.

The luncheon also honored Alice Holloway

Young, a longtime educator with the Rochester School District and a founding trustee of Monroe Community College.

Holloway Young told program graduates that they should serve as mentors as well as community leaders.

"The challenge is to be a person of substance," said Holloway Young. "As such, you will influence... You will step up, and speak up." □

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