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Omega Psi Phi honors noteworthy citizens

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SPRING VALLEY

Some of Rockland's best-known citizens were honored last night for service to their communities and their black heritage during the first Achievement Week program of the Rockland chapter of Omega Psi Phi fraternity.

Stella Marrs, Dr. Susan Gordon, Willie Worsley, Thomas Wallace and Edward McBride Jr. were recognized for their dedication to children and the common good in ceremonies held in the newly opened town of Ramapo Cultural Arts Center before an audience of nearly 60 friends, well-wishers and fraternity and sorority members from Rockland and Westchester. A half-dozen politicians also were in attendance.

"We've given out awards before, but during chapter meetings. This is our coming-out party," said Dennis V. McGloster, Basileus (president) of the Xi Lambda Lambda chapter of the fraternity. The Rockland chapter was chartered in 2003. The fraternity was created in 1911. "I think we have a tendency to give recognition awards to people after they've stopped doing things. If you know these individuals, you know they don't stop."

Achievement Week awards are a requirement of the fraternity, said member Newton Paul. They date back to 1927, when one of the fraternity members wanted to provide a place to recognize people within the black community for their dedication to their history and improving the lives of others. "We are to seek out individuals that contributed to our community day in and day out," Paul said.

The fraternity gave out five awards: Citizen of the Year, County Persons of the Year, Omega Man of the Year and a Special Award for Achievement.

Worsley, a member of the 1966 Texas Western basketball team featured in the film "Glory Road," was honored for his continuing work with children in the area, including helping with a yearly basketball camp at Rockland Community College and mentoring emotionally disturbed youth in the greater New York metropolitan area. He was introduced by former Knicks player Mel Davis.

"I knew there was somebody on that team that looked like me. Willie Worsley demonstrated what that was all about," Davis said. "It was about 'give me a chance, let me compete.' This

man has given his time and shared his vision."

Worsley, who accepted his award with tears in his eyes, said a simple thank you. "I'm just a regular guy," he said before the ceremony. "I'm deeply honored, but I'm even more surprised I could get such an award."

Wallace, named Citizen of the Year, was praised for his generosity and continuing support by member Kevin Woodhouse, who described him as "a fine person, a great man, a great Omega and a great American."

Both Gordon and Marrs were named Persons of the Year for their untiring work on behalf of the area's children and their support of social, educational and community programs that benefit youth.

"I try my best to make the world a better place, especially for children," Gordon said. McBride was named Omega Man of the Year for his work within the fraternity.

"I think people need to be recognized for what they do," said D. Anne Nash of Pomona, who attended the ceremony to support the fraternity and the people being honored. Margaret C. Brown of Nanuet and Idette Flemings-Earl of Spring Valley, officers of Omega's sister sorority, Delta Sigma Delta, said they were delighted to show their support by attending the awards ceremony.

"It's just a great thing for the community to see," Flemings-Earl said, "especially to get the youth out to see what you can aspire to be. The main thing is to support each other."

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