

## 2016 WTS-LA Scholarship and Awards Dinner Helps Feed the Next Generation's Dreams



WTS-LA Scholarship and Awards Dinner, Photos © John Livzey, 2016

Dinner is a catch-all word. In the Middle Ages, for example, it meant the first meal of the day. For WTS-LA, the annual Scholarship and Awards Dinner also has multiple meanings. A collegial get-together, a networking event, and an opportunity to recognize the outstanding contributions of transportation professionals. But it also serves another very significant purpose.

“This year we awarded \$43,000 in scholarships to deserving high school, undergraduate and graduate students, and mid-career professionals. And that’s just extraordinary,” explains 2016 WTS-LA Scholarship and Awards Dinner co-chair and Hatch Mott MacDonald project engineer Lisa Karwoski, PE. “Equally important, we also raised about the same amount through the dinner, raffle, and silent auction to jumpstart the scholarship fund for next year. It was just a wonderful evening and a productive start for fundraising.”

2016 WTS-LA Scholarship and Awards Dinner co-chair Samantha Foley agrees. “It really was special. In addition to our two wonderful emcees, LAWA CEO Deborah Flint and Metro Chief Planning Officer Therese McMillan, First Lady of Los Angeles Elaine Wakeland also joined us and spoke passionately about her invaluable work for the city. But the most moving part of the evening for everyone was to witness these young people earning scholarships for their transportation education. That really speaks to what the evening and WTS-LA are all about.”



With a capacity crowd of WTS-LA members and transportation dignitaries in attendance, the dinner helped celebrate local transportation luminaries for their achievements. WTS-LA named LADOT general manager Seleta Reynolds *Woman of the Year*, AECOM senior vice president Stephen Polechonis the *WTS Ray LaHood Man of the Year*, LAWA the *Employer of the Year*, HDR civil engineer Lucy Terrell-Lewis the *Member of the Year*, Metro Diversity and Economic Opportunity executive officer Miguel Cabral the *Diversity Leadership Award*, BETA/Narbonne High School lead teacher Carol Shaw-

Loose the *Educator of the Year*, and Metro/City of Los Angeles Bikeshare Partnership the *Innovative Transportation Solutions Award*.



In addition, WTS-LA rewarded deserving students with numerous scholarships including the *Joan G. Wood Memorial High School Scholarship*, the *Marilyn J. Reese High School Scholarship*, the *PB Marty Rubin Memorial Scholarship*, two *WTS-LA Director's Scholarships*, the *Alexandra Spencer Transportation Communications Scholarship*, the *Richard G. Newman AECOM Scholarship*, the *Southern California Association of Governments Scholarship*, two *Ava Doner Memorial Undergraduate Scholarships*, and two *Myra L. Frank Memorial Graduate Scholarships*. Several of the student scholarship winners represent the first generation in their families to attend college. And all of the university students in attendance vowed to use their scholarship winnings to further their transportation education, with the promise of giving back to the transportation community and WTS-LA.

For WTS-LA, the 2016 Scholarship and Awards Dinner meant many things to many people. But its most lasting meaning was to help feed the imagination and dreams of emerging transportation professionals, as it was designed to do.

*This article was written by Arthur Schurr, a New York-based freelance writer who reports on transportation and infrastructure.*