

The 2017 WTS-LA Scholarship and Awards Dinner: A Fête with a Kick



2017 WTS-LA Scholarship and Awards Dinner, 2017

This dinner was no ordinary meal. Trying to outdo last year's scholarship and awards dinner, the Annual Scholarship and Awards Dinner Committee had their work cut out for them. Not only did they have to plan and execute a complex program and dinner, they had to do it on the heels of last year's extraordinary celebration. But they delivered. And the 2017 WTS-LA Annual Scholarship and Awards Dinner proved to be an exceptional gala.

Not only did the chapter award \$71,000 in scholarships (a record!), the attendees also heard first hand from high school, undergraduate, and graduate students exactly what those awards meant to them and how they planned to use the funds to further their educations. After they spoke, there were no dry eyes in the house. In addition, both Ashlien Savage and Evelyn Park delivered their extremely moving stories as winners of the board-funded WTS-LA Directors' Award. And all of the award winners spoke poignantly about the meaning and value recognition from WTS-LA brings to their careers and their hearts. Of particular note was Metro CEO Phil Washington, the WTS-LA 2017 Honorable Ray LaHood Award winner.



Phil Washington, Metro CEO and 2017 WTS-LA Honorable Ray LaHood Award Recipient

Citing his personal relationship with former USDOT Secretary Ray LaHood (when Washington ran Denver's RTD), Washington also focused on the principle of the award, giving examples of how fair hiring practices are good business and actually save money. In one particular anecdote, he told of a female snowplow driver and how accidents have dropped precipitously since more female snowplow drivers were hired, as male drivers tend to "show off" when operating the equipment. He also chided the night's superlative emcees—Metro's Jeanet Owens and Tim Lindholm—for awarding an Uber gift card as a raffle prize...

Finally, tremendous credit was given all around for both Owens and Lindholm, who kept the proceedings light and moving at a rapid pace. A difficult task, they performed yeoman's work while keeping everyone engaged and on point. Also of note were the toast by CH2M's Judy Johnson, the party favors, wine at each table, and the generous support of all the volunteers and corporate partners that helped make the event possible.

This was no ordinary meal. But WTS-LA is no ordinary organization. Still, the 2017 WTS-LA Annual Scholarship and Awards Dinner will be remembered as one of the best celebrations ever. So, great credit and thanks also goes to the event organizer and Annual Scholarship and Awards Dinner chair Puja Thomas-Patel and her committee. See you next year...