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Awards recognize Cornell-community collaborations

By Nancy Doolittle

Celebrating partnerships between local organizations and the university, President David Skorton and Cornell senior leaders presented the annual Cornell Town-Gown (TOGO) Awards Dec. 8 at Ithaca High School.

Dozens of community members from across Tompkins County attended the event, which also paid tribute to local leaders who are retiring.

Steve Johnson, vice president for government and community relations, presented a TOGO award to Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT), named "outstanding public transportation system in North America" in 2011 by the American Public Transportation Association. TCAT is a partnership between Tompkins County, the city of Ithaca and Cornell.

Randy Allen, associate dean for international and corporate relations at the Samuel C. Johnson Graduate School of Management, recognized the work of the Johnson Board Fellows Program. The program provides Johnson students with leadership experience and connects them with organizations, including the United Way of Tompkins County and the Southside Community Center.

The Ithaca City School District (ICSD)-Cornell University Working Group received a TOGO from Tommy



Lindsay France/University Photography

Enjoying the second annual Town-Gown Awards Dec. 8 at Ithaca High School are, from left: Vice President Stephen Philip Johnson; Marcia Fort, director of the Greater Ithaca Activities Center; President David Skorton; Ithaca Mayor Svante Myrick; and Martha Robertson, chair of the Tompkins County Legislature.



Lindsay France/University Photography

Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars collect food for the Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard at the Dec. 8 Town-Gown Awards event.

 E-mail article











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Bruce, vice president for university communications, for its efforts to bring Cornell outreach units and ICSD staff together for networking opportunities, sponsor an annual resource fair, and develop new initiatives, including extended day programming in two ICSD elementary schools, scheduled to begin in February.

Noting that town-gown communications and collaborations are critical to promote safety in the gorges, and acknowledging the recent death in Cascadilla Gorge, Mary Opperman, vice president for human resources and safety services, presented a TOGO to the Gorge Safety Task Force for its efforts to promote education, appropriate recreational alternatives, enforcement, visitor access and infrastructure.

Leonardo Vargas-Mendez, director of the Public Service Center (PSC), presented a TOGO to a joint initiative of Cornell Cooperative Extension and the PSC. Each week, volunteer students from the PSC's Youth Outreach Undergraduates Reshaping Success (YOURS) program mentor, play games, do outdoor activities and go on field trips with youth from underserved mobile home parks who belong to the 4-H program Opportunity, Understanding, Respect, Success (OURS).

Skorton presented a special TOGO to Marcia Fort, director of the Greater Ithaca Activities Center, in recognition of her leadership. Skorton also drew attention to the many ways Cornell students contribute to the welfare of the local area, including several Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars who were present to collect food for the Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard.

Recognized individuals who have retired or soon will be retiring were City of Ithaca Public Works Director Bill Gray, Ithaca Youth Bureau Director Allen Green, Cayuga Medical Center President and CEO Rob Mackenzie, Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga BOCES Superintendent Ellen O'Donnell, Ithaca Common Council member Eddie Rooker, Franziska Racker Centers Executive Director Roger Sibley, Ithaca Police Chief Ed Vallely and Gadabout Executive Director Judy Willis.

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