

4 Distinguished Organizations Identified as National Models for Innovation + Inclusion Leadership

The Society for Diversity will recognize the winners of the Innovation + Inclusion Leadership Awards at the Diversity 3.0 Conference in Chicago

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, May 24, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For the last 8 years, the Society for Diversity (SFD) has recognized the work of outstanding organizations and individuals who have demonstrated excellence in employment equity and workplace inclusion. During SFD's annual conference at the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place in Chicago, Innovation + Inclusion Leadership Awards will be conferred in 4 categories on June 28th. The selected individuals and organizations serve as national models for getting better outcomes from the investment in workplace [diversity and inclusion](#). What has been unique about SFD's awards is that its national nomination and selection process is completely practitioner led.



INNOVATIONS, STRATEGIES & SKILLS
for Intentional Outcomes



Laura I. Gomez, Founder & CEO of Atipica

The Society for Diversity, the #1 global professional association for diversity and inclusion, acknowledges that the quality of equity work has evolved and improved over the years. Therefore, in 2017, SFD added "innovation" to the award to signify how collaboration, new strategies, and technology have changed equity, diversity and inclusion work. The 2017 award winners are:

- Individual category: Nzinga C. Shaw, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer of the Atlanta Hawks Basketball Club
- Corporate category: Veterans United Home Loans (VUHL)
- Nonprofit category: The Institute for Sustainable Diversity & Inclusion
- Education category: Kent State University

Andrea Brandon, Society for Diversity Staff Liaison to the Awards Committee, noted that there were several characteristics that stood out about the award winners. Brandon said, "Nzinga Shaw's leadership as a Diversity & Inclusion Officer has resulted in major changes in the Atlanta Hawks organization, and her work has served as a blueprint for changes in the NBA. Despite the odds being

against her as a young, African American woman, Nzinga's tenacity to see change has paid off and it enables her to stand out above the rest."

Each of the awards recipients have amazing stories to share, and have demonstrated success in a way that can be replicated nationally. For example, Effenus Henderson, Co-Founder at the Institute for Sustainable Diversity and Inclusion, is the former Chief Diversity Officer for Weyerhaeuser, where he worked for 40 years. As a thought-leader, Mr. Henderson has held numerous board level positions, as well as served as the Co-Chair for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Diversity and Inclusion Standards Taskforce. The Institute for Sustainable Diversity and Inclusion created a collaborative learning model in partnership with major northwest firms such as Nordstrom, Boeing, Alaska Airlines, T-Mobile, Port of Seattle and more, in order to leverage transformative education and practical tools to address emerging issues in inclusive work environments.

Likewise, Kent State University developed an interactive Education and Training Lab that features simulations and intercultural assessment tools to facilitate dialogue and workshops for its 2,200 faculty, staff and students. It was so successful, that the University extended its work to over 500 community-based leaders and partners.

Loreli Wilson, Manager of Diversity and Inclusion at Veterans United Home Loans (VUHL), had already implemented several robust diversity interventions when she achieved her Certified Diversity Professional (CDP) Credential from SFD's Institute for [Diversity Certification](#) in 2016. Brandon notes, "VUHL's overall ability to increase racial diversity and improve their new employee tracking efforts have worked to ensure that employees are not expected to 'fit' BEFORE they start working, but that they are engaged to 'fit' into a great professional environment, and stay with the company, AFTER they are hired."

Other honorable award nominees include: Gail B. Williams, Hodges University; James Banks, Suffolk County Community College; Felicia Johnson, Goodyear; Sayumi Irey, Bellevue College Social Justice Leadership Institute; Dr. Wanda Heading-Grant, University of Vermont; Eric Guthrie, BetterMEBetterWE; Mission Hospital; Empowerment Through Integration (ETI); and INROADS, Inc. Leah Smiley, President of the Society for Diversity, asserts, "I have personally worked with many of the nominees so I know choosing a winner was a difficult decision. Nevertheless, what makes this awards process organic is the fact that people who work in the field are making the decisions and determining what is most important in advancing this work around the world."

Angela Winfield, Director of the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity at Cornell University and Nikki McGruder, Regional Manager at Diversity Awareness Partnership, served as the Awards Committee co-chairs. The committee evaluated the following criterion in making their decision:

- Use of innovative or advanced equity, diversity and inclusion technology
- Next generation strategies for inclusion or culture change
- Enterprise-wide or management learning/collaboration
- Revenue generation or cost savings from equity, diversity and inclusion efforts

Winfield said, "The award recipients demonstrated clear, measurable and significant impact. In the diversity and inclusion space, it is easy to be lulled into thinking it is all about increasing awareness and how employees feel, which certainly is important, but it is at least equally important to get tangible results. By designing innovative approaches and programs aimed at making a measurable difference, we advance not only diversity and inclusion, but also our organizations. Each of the award recipients has done just this and moved into a brave new space where diversity and inclusion is bringing benefit to everyone involved."

McGruder added, "Being clear and intentional about driving forward diversity and inclusion goals was the main motivator for the choices I made for award recipients. Being creative in the approach to providing education, training and opportunities to create inclusive environments is what all organizations should be striving for. These recipients have figured out that we can no longer just talk about diversity in a "pie in the sky" way. They are about doing the work to get it done."

Smiley concurs, "The conversation about diversity and inclusion has to move beyond a simplistic discussion about race, gender or political correctness, towards innovations, strategies and skills that get meaningful and intentional results. This is the overarching purpose of the Diversity 3.0 conference."

The awards dinner will be held on Wednesday, June 28th from 6:00pm to 8:00pm and Laura I. Gomez, Founder of Silicon Valley's Atipica, is scheduled to give a keynote address. Conference attendees will represent diversity and human resource executives from 3 countries and 27 states. For more information, visit www.societyfordiversity.org or call 1-800-764-3336.

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