

Holland salutes those who promote cultural harmony

Sunday, January 21, 2007

By Myron Kukla

The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- Eight years of promoting cross-cultural understanding in the city has earned the Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony a Social Justice Award from the city of Holland.

The nonprofit organization was one of five individuals and groups receiving the awards from Holland Human Relations Commission.

"We're very proud that they've selected us for this award to recognize the efforts of our group in promoting education, understanding and harmony between the many cultures within our community," said Eleanor Lopez, who has been a member of the organization since 2001.

The Alliance was recognized for its educational work.

Social Justice Awards also were presented to the Holland Fire Department, Jubilee Ministries, Celestino "Tino" Reyes and Holland High School student Dominique Maria Vargas.

The Human Relations Commission recognized Holland Fire Department in the employment category for its hiring of it's first female firefighter, Heidi Canfield.

Jubilee Ministries was recognized for its work in renovating old homes for low-income families and generating neighborhood revitalization.

Reyes, a former director of Latin Americans United for Progress, received the community and government relations award for his years of service to the community.

Vargas received the youth recognition award for her work with promoting fitness among Holland young people with her dance group All for One.

"These individuals, groups are being honored for their promotion of equity and social justice in our community," said Commission coordinator Al Serrano.

"They are the reserves and reinforcements in the city's effort to help improve the lives of individuals and families in our town."

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