



Cornell University

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Skorton, campus and community leaders honored

By Nancy Doolittle
njd3@cornell.edu

In a tribute to President David Skorton and Professor Robin Davisson, a donation in their names to support 10 years of United Way of Tompkins County's Summers of Service scholarships will be made to the Cornell Student United Way Campaign beginning in 2015.

Vice President for University Relations Joel Malina, whose division will fund the contribution, made the announcement Dec. 6 at the Town-Gown (TOGO) Awards celebration. The scholarships will be awarded to local high school students with an

interest in public engagement, Malina told an audience of 200 community and campus leaders at Ithaca High School.

Visibly moved by this tribute, Skorton said: "Everywhere I've lived, the United Way and the multiplicity of agencies it represents have been absolutely critical."

Earlier, he had acknowledged that this was his last TOGO Award celebration. "We have been through a lot of challenges together," Skorton said, referring to the economic downturn and, more recently, to the tragedies during Thanksgiving break. "Communities big and small never, ever, run out of difficulties to deal with, unfortunately, and nonprofits and businesses and the spirit of this community are the glue that keeps everything together."



Lindsay France/University Photography

Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars collect food for local food pantries. From left, Sady Ramirez Ossa, Tucker Shea, Mayur Patel, Amanda Moretti, Ziva Posner, President Skorton, Jessie Reeves, Leah DeWitt, Amir Elsamadisi, Tom Hittinger and Marissa Lee.

The scholarship announcement capped the TOGO Awards, which celebrate partnerships between local organizations and the university.

Susan Murphy, vice president for student and academic services, paid tribute to St. Luke Lutheran Church in Collegetown for serving as a community gathering place and a welcoming venue for town-gown meetings and programs. She recognized St. Luke Pastor Rick Bair; Judy Tennant, St. Luke Church Council president; and Julie Paige, of Cornell's Off-Campus Housing Office, with the first of the day's awards.

KyuJung Whang, vice president for facilities services, recognized the Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership, a forum where agencies and organizations monitoring the health of Cayuga Lake meet regularly to share the results of their work and to explore ways to improve and expand monitoring efforts. Accepting the TOGO award were Roxy Johnston, Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership chair and watershed coordinator and lab director at the City of Ithaca Water Treatment Plant; Frank Proto, chair of the Tompkins County Water Resources Council; and Bert Bland, associate vice president in facilities and Cornell's energy and sustainability director.

Christopher Dunn, the Elizabeth Newman Wilds Director of Cornell Plantations, presented the third award to the "Kids Discover the Trail" initiative, a collaboration among the Ithaca Public Education Initiative, the Ithaca City School District and the Discovery Trail that provides educational area field



Lindsay France/University Photography

Susan Murphy recognizes Julie Paige with a TOGO award.



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President David Skorton addresses campus and community leaders at his final TOGO awards celebration.

trips for students in grades pre-K to 5. Accepting the award were Mary Grainger, Ithaca Public Education Initiative; Charlie Trautmann, Sciencenter; Sonja Skelly, Cornell Plantations; Nancy Trautmann, Lab of Ornithology; and Cathy Klimaszewski, Johnson Museum.

Mary Opperman, vice president for human resources and safety services, recognized Rev: Ithaca Startup Works, a new business incubator that offers entrepreneurs a place in downtown Ithaca to grow their businesses. Accepting the award were Chris Ward on behalf of Frost Travis, Rev's landlord; Tom Schryver, Rev mentor and executive director for the Center for Regional Economic Advancement at Cornell; and Carl Haynes, president of Tompkins Cortland Community College.

Malina presented the final group TOGO award to the community and campus members who work on food distribution and recovery networks in the local area: Steve Griffin, Foodnet Meals on Wheels; Rev. Christina Culver, Loaves and Fishes of Tompkins County; Ruth Williams, the Food Distribution Network; Cornell student John Lowry '16, Food Recovery Network; Therese O'Connor, Cornell Dining; Steve McKay, Cornell's Homer C. Thompson Vegetable Research Farm; Natasha Thompson, the Food Bank of the Southern Tier; and Marty Hatch, Friendship Donations Network.

"It is difficult to think of work that is more important, and more pressing, than working for the poor and hungry among us in Tompkins County, here and now," Malina said. He also thanked the Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars who attended the TOGO awards to collect food for local food pantries.

John Gutenberger, senior adviser to community relations, recognized six area residents leaving public office or high-profile positions: Terry Byrnes, founder and retiring board president of the Ithaca Public Education Initiative; Audrey Cooper, who has led numerous human-service agencies in Ithaca; Mimi Melegrito, who worked at the Ithaca Youth Bureau for more than 30 years; Jean McPheeters, recently retired from the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce, where she served as president for 14 years; Nancy Potter, who has worked more than 30 years with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County; and Aurora Valenti, who brought a customer-service orientation to her work as county clerk, clerk of the courts and director of the Department of Motor Vehicles in Ithaca.

The annual TOGO Awards, which began in 2011, are held on the first Saturday morning of December, and alternate between community and campus venues.

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