

Uzelac, Todman honored with Diversity Awards

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — “Service” isn’t a word that often comes up in discussing the late civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.’s legacy.

That’s why Lake Michigan College broke from its normal routine Monday – the federal King Day holiday – to honor two people for their contributions to the community.

Former Whirlpool Corp. executive Michael Todman and Benton Harbor High School football coach Elliott Uzelac were honored during LMC’s 21st annual breakfast celebration and awards Monday.

Both men received Martin Luther King Jr. Diversity awards, which new LMC President Jennifer Spielvogel presented, with LMC Board Chairwoman Mary Jo Tomasini. LMC has given out the award for 15 years.

“These men have generously devoted their time and talents in the service of others,” Spielvogel said in the college’s news release. “We’re proud to highlight the remarkable impact they’ve made on our communities, and hope they serve as an inspiration to us all to carry forth Dr. King’s legacy of equity, unity and respect.”

Those values are also part of LMC’s mission, as well, Spielvogel said Tuesday night.

“Equity, and inclusiveness, and integrity – those gentlemen have such integrity as did Martin Luther King,” she said.

Todman and Uzelac’s readiness to give back to their communities made them a perfect fit for this year’s theme, which was, “What are you doing for others?” Spielvogel said.

“What he did internationally, and what he is now doing as a retiree, in serving the community, is his (Todman’s) recognition,” she said.

Todman retired last month from Whirlpool after a 22-year career. He held several high-level po-

sitions, including president, board of directors vice chairman and global strategist. He is nationally known as one of “Black Enterprise” magazine’s “100 Most Powerful Executives.”

LMC’s Board of Trustees chose Todman “because of his support for a more holistic approach to global business, and his emphasis on the importance of learning, listening to and appreciating differ-

ent perspectives,” the college’s release said.

He is also recognized for his local leadership on the board of Boys and Girls Club of Benton Harbor.

“I have a lot of people to thank for the opportunities that I’ve had,” Todman said as he accepted his award. “I truly believe every individual has something to contribute. All it takes is a little bit of will and desire to go out and make it happen. I’m inspired by all the things I heard today and I want to contribute even more.”

Uzelac, a former college coach, came out of retirement to lead Benton Harbor High School and helped the Tigers make the playoffs for the first time in school history.

He was recognized for his leadership, passion and commitment to the student athletes, and for helping to organize the community to come together in support of the team.

Uzelac was chosen “for what he did for Benton Harbor, and his army (of volunteers). And it’s not just on the field that they’re succeeding,” Spielvogel said. “He continues to challenge them – thinking about college, those kinds of things. And it was a group of moms, and the whole team that responded to him.”

Uzelac credited the players, their family of “Tiger Moms” and all the coaches who worked under him. “I was just one person who tried to unite their beliefs in themselves and to go in the right direction,” he said.



TODMAN



UZELAC