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Rockland's Xi Lambda Lambda holds Achievement Week

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SPRING VALLEY - The Xi Lambda Lambda chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity yesterday recognized members of the Rockland community who have made contributions toward improving the quality of life for black Americans.

The gathering, part of the group's third annual Achievement Week, was held at the Ramapo Cultural Art Center and attended by fraternity members, public officials, community leaders and members of the public.

"We want to shine a light on the movers and shakers of our community," said Dennis V. McGloster, the president of Xi Lambda Lambda, which is the Rockland chapter.

The "Citizen of the Year 2007" award went to Judge Theodore T. Jones of the New York State Appeals Court. Just the fourth black judge to sit on the state's highest court, Jones was recognized for his outstanding contribution to the state and surrounding communities.

"The Omegas of today have to be prepared for the challenges of tomorrow," Jones told the audience. "In this world of cell phones, iPods and Internet, we have to grow. Though we have to learn our traditions, we can't afford to be stuck in the past."

The "Omega Man of the Year 2007" award went to Scott Watson of Nanuet, a recent addition to the Rockland chapter, who, though new to the area, had distinguished himself by being available at all times for the needs of the fraternity.

"He landed running," said T. Edward McBride, who introduced Watson to the audience. "He has been involved in everything."

Omega Psi Phi was founded in 1911 by three Howard University undergraduate students using the initials of the Greek phrase meaning "friendship is essential to the soul." The phrase became its motto and "manhood, scholarship, perseverance and uplift" became its cardinal principals. Over the decades, several hundred chapters have emerged with membership numbering thousands across the country.

The Xi Lambda Lambda chapter was founded in Pomona in September 2003 by a group of graduate and professional men to foster involvement in community service and volunteer work.

The Omega Psi Phi has mandated programs that include, among others, the annual Achievement Week, which was held yesterday in Spring Valley. Others are the National Social Action Program, which includes encouraging voter registration, support for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and for the National Urban League; and a Talent Hunt Program, which provides exposure, encouragement and financial assistance to talented young people.

Other programs include the Senior Citizen Project, which provides services to seniors, and the Dr. Charles R. Drew Memorial Blood Drive.

As part of Achievement Week, the fraternity recognized two women as "Rockland Co-Persons of the Year."

Frances Pratt, president of the Nyack chapter of the NAACP, was one of the awardees. She was recognized for her activism in civil and human rights, as well as her long work as a nurse.

"I'm excited and pleased to be co-honoree ... for this prestigious award," Pratt said. "Your encouragement gives me the strength to move forward."

The other award went to Patricia Hurlock, who was described as an "unsung hero" by McGloster.

Hurlock runs a media company in Chestnut Ridge and was recognized for leading a book club of 40 children; co-founding Naomi's Program of Excellence, an academic and cultural enrichment program, and for being an active member of the PTA.
