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FLYING HIGH

Party that honors aviator introduces achievers, cadets

This article was published January 25, 2015 at 2:51 a.m.



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Milton P. Crenshaw, Arkansas-born member of the original Tuskegee Airmen, was unable to attend his 96th birthday party. After a fall, he moved to Atlanta, where he's now being cared for by his daughter. But the party went on ... rather, the third annual Milton Pitts Crenshaw Awards Banquet & Birthday Celebration, held Jan. 17 in the Harry R. Kendall Science & Health Mission Center at Philander Smith College, proceeded. Stephanie Walker Hynes and Reba Wingfield were masters of ceremonies for the evening, which included a buffet dinner.

Terence Bolden, the academy's board president, was Skyped in from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, to introduce other board members as well as Crenshaw, who shared a brief statement by phone. Bolden and Edmond Davis, historian and friend of Crenshaw, led the audience in singing "Happy Birthday."

Crenshaw was also featured in raw documentary footage and in a tribute poem written by Patricia Washington McGraw, from which she read an excerpt. Col. James D. Dryjanski, commander of the 314th Airlift Wing, Little Rock Air Force Base, joined Judge Berlin Jones and Col. Keith Green, vice commander of the 314th, in introducing the academy's civilian cadets, all students at Cloverdale Aerospace Technology Conversion Charter Middle School.

Introduced by academy board vice president Michele Wright, Terry L. Esper, an associate professor for the Sam M. Walton College of Business, University of Arkansas, gave the evening's address. Awards were presented afterward. Cloverdale Middle School was presented the academy's Community Partnership Award. Billy Graham of Ruston, La., earned the Willie C. Smith Aviation Service Award. Allen Green accepted the academy's Courage in Aviation Award on behalf of his brother, the late Marlon D. Green, The Milton P. Crenshaw Lifetime Achievement Award went to

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former Kansas state Sen. U.L. "Rip" Gooch. Volunteer Tami East received the academy's President's Award.

The event also included a silent auction of T-shirts signed by Crenshaw.

The Crenshaw Aviation Training Academy was founded in 2009 to provide educational opportunities in the fields of aviation and aerospace, especially to children and youth in underserved communities.

-- Story and photos by Helaine R. Williams

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