A former city employee was honored at a service in remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Saturday. At an annual event at the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History on Saturday, Anise Hickman, who spent for 26 years in human resources for the city, received the 2017 Dreamer Award for the Mount Airy-Surry County branch of the National Association of University Women. Past recipients of the award include Jimmy Stockton, who founded God's Helping Hands free store, Faye Carter, the long-time president of the local NAACP chapter, and Melva Houston Tucker, who organized a decades-long tradition of serving a community Thanksgiving meal. Hickman was also named an "In the Spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr." honoree for leadership. According to Cheryl Yellow Fawn Scott, who made one of the two presentations, Hickman was in charge of employee benefits for the city. She earned multiple degrees and certifications prior to and throughout her time with the city, and she managed to stay heavily involved with the Surry County branch of the NAACP throughout it all. "I have to thank God first," said Hickman. "He is the center of my life and the center of my joy." Hickman went on to thank her children, other family members and friends for their support throughout her life's journey. "They have always supported me," said Hickman, recalling her days earning a degree while balancing school with a full-time job and a family.

Others in the community also were recognized. Clinton Brim was recognized for the unity he has shown throughout his life. In Brim's statement he recalled going into the U.S. Army during Vietnam. It was the Patrick County, Virginia, native's first experience with racial integration. After serving alongside black and white soldiers alike, Brim returned home to segregation, where, as he recalled, black people entered local establishments through the side or back door. That is, until one day, when some black men wanted "a cold one" and walked through the front door of a local bar. Though some weren't happy, according to Brim, that bar was no longer segregated.

Vera Smith Reynolds, who recently made a run for a seat in the N.C. House of Representatives, was the first African-American to graduate from Blue Ridge High School in Patrick County. Her life-long career in education led the group to name her an honoree in the area of mentorship. In the area of character,

Ron Snow was recognized by the group. Snow, another army veteran, started the Meter Masters Track Club in Mount Airy and once served as NAACP president. In Snow's statement, he recalled attending the second march Dr. King led on Washington D.C.

Clint Carter entered into the service of his country during the Korean War. He also served tours

in Vietnam throughout his 23-year army career. The Purple Heart recipient was the group's honoree in the area of sacrifice.

Scott called Dr. Carolyn Watkins a foundation builder as she announced the educator as an honoree. Watkins started Bright Beginnings Preschools, taught in the Surry County Schools and was a professor at Winston-Salem State University and Surry Community College. Watkins recalled how unequal the theory of "separate but equal" was in education, noting at the black school she attended that students lacked appropriate supplies and studied from used, outdated books. However, innovative and concerned teachers at that school built a foundation for Watkins, allowing her to go out into the world and build foundations for youngsters in Surry County and the surrounding area.

Jackie Snow was named an "In the Spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr." honoree for the perseverance he has shown throughout his lifetime. He, too, served in Vietnam; his clerical skills earned him an office position instead of being placed in the infantry. He went on to work desk jobs throughout his civilian career, and he became the first African-American claims auditor at an insurance company in Columbia, South Carolina. Snow said he once had a teacher who told him, "Never put yourself in a position where you'll have to use the ignorance stick." He took that advice, and rather than dig ditches, he armed himself with education throughout his life and advanced in his career.

"Bishop Tony Carter is the absolute finest man I know," said Bill Hall as he presented the bishop's award in the area of faith. Hall said Carter has spent a lifetime in the service of others, and that's exactly what he was doing on Saturday. "Bishop Carter is attending to a friend in need," said Hall as Eric Strickland accepted the award on Carter's behalf.

The group also recognized the work of some youngsters. The group called attention to William and Sadiq Pilson's work in the area of faith at their church and Dante Watson's educational accomplishments. Those in attendance paid tribute to Keyshawn and Kendrick Oliver for their annual work at a community Thanksgiving dinner.

Scott drew inspiration from King as she explained the work of so many in civil rights. "He (King) always prayed for the pilots when he was traveling," said Scott. "He also said a prayer for the ground crew." Scott said there are a lot of members of the ground crew in the civil rights movement. While there work is important, they often go unrecognized. While the accomplishments of locals were honored at the 12th-annual program, the 100 or so in

attendance gathered to honor and celebrate the spirit of King. Brack Llewellyn provided a little history of the civil rights movement and King.  Llewellyn said King worked a farm job as a teenager in Connecticut. He was astonished to find a world, as King wrote, without racism north of Washington D.C. Many years later, the Montgomery bus boycott would jettison King into the spotlight, and he would eventually become one of the great faces associated with the civil rights movement in America.

The program also featured musical selections from multiple performers. Some selections were somber, and others moved the entire room to clap along.  Scott said in the past there has been more music at the annual event. However, the 2017 event featured more honorees, a trade-off Scott was happy to make in order to recognize more people making accomplishments in the local community.  A candle was lit for both Christ and in King's honor. Refreshments followed the event, which was about two and a half hours in duration.