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Institute of Gerontology Employee Wins Top “Ability is Ageless” Award

DETROIT -- Odessa Jackson won a “Most ABLE” award from Operation ABLE of Michigan for her positive work ethic, special contributions to her employer and ability to overcome difficulties in order to achieve success. Jackson is a receptionist and assists with fund development at the Institute of Gerontology at Wayne State University. She was recognized at a formal luncheon recently where she received a certificate and engraved crystal plaque from WDIV news anchor and luncheon emcee Carmen Harlan.

Jackson’s nomination cited her radiant attitude, deep respect for others, energy, and high quality work as traits that make her a special employee at the Institute of Gerontology. She is an active volunteer in her community and especially at Green Grove Baptist Church (Pastor Rev. Luther A. Puckett) where she has been a member of the Usher’s Ministry. Jackson now serves as 2nd Vice President and State Convention Chair of the United Church Usher’s Association of Michigan under State President Jackie Williams.



Jackson received the award alongside her nominator Dr. Peter Lichtenberg, director of the Institute of Gerontology. In her speech to the crowd of more than 100, Jackson thanked her daughter Yvonne and her “family” at the Institute of Gerontology. “I congratulate all the nominees to the award,” she said. “You are all so deserving. And I am especially grateful to Operation ABLE for their mature worker training programs and their philosophy that ability is ageless.”

The nomination for Jackson described her as “a morning cup of sunshine for all. Odessa represents the Institute of Gerontology with warmth and fidelity. Her social skills and work abilities are more than ‘ageless,’ they are ‘age-enhanced.’” Wayne State was also honored to have President Allan Gilmour receive Operation ABLE’s Neal Shine Lifetime Achievement Award for his decision to “un-retire” a second time and skillfully guide the university through the difficult post-recession period.

Operation ABLE is a non-profit organization founded in 1986 to help train and employ workers 40 and older through its Center for Working Families. It is affiliated with Spectrum Human Services and currently working with the AARP Foundation to expand services for adults 50 and older who have been hard hit by the current economic downturn.

The Institute of Gerontology researches the aging process, educates students in gerontology, and presents programs on aging issues relevant to professionals, caregivers and older adults in the community (www.ioq.wayne.edu). The Institute is part of the Division of Research at Wayne State University, one of the nation’s preeminent public research institutions in an urban setting. For more information about research at Wayne State University, visit <http://www.research.wayne.edu>.