

HARTFORD, Conn. – The YMCA of Greater Hartford held its annual, signature fundraising event, YMCA Celebrates Champions, on Thursday, October 26, 2017. Guests enjoyed an evening of good company, live and silent auctions for some pretty special items, and a chance to hear from some of the champions in our lives, including YMCA of Greater Hartford CEO Harold Sparrow and Pro Football Hall-of-Famer Andre Tippett.



Harold Sparrow, YMCA of Greater Hartford president and CEO; Sarah Cody, Channel 8 news anchor and host of the event; and Andre Tippett, former New England Patriots linebacker and Pro Football Hall-of-Famer

“The YMCA Celebrates Champions event is held to show how vital of a role the YMCA of Greater Hartford plays in the 52 towns and cities that we serve. Harold Sparrow, CEO of the YMCA of Greater Hartford, said, “Eight out of 10 Americans have a YMCA story, it is one of the most recognizable brands in America...we even have our own letter of the alphabet!”

Sparrow went on to speak about the Y’s vision to engage those 52 communities, ignite their passions, and achieve goals by strengthening communities. . But how do we do that? In his speech at the Champions event, Sparrow said, “Our cause is to strengthen communities, and we do that by building partnerships with for-profits, non-profits, neighbors, volunteers, staff and community epicenters.”

Honored guest this year was Andre Tippett, who is best known for his 11 seasons as a linebacker for the New England Patriots and for being inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. However, it is the work he has done since retiring from the gridiron that most endears him to the Y. Tippett has worked for over a decade in the front office for the Patriots as the executive director of community

affairs. In this role, Tippet contributes to the New England community in various ways. He is also featured in the Good Men Project, a program that recruits male role models to help build and sustain a national conversation about being a good father, son, husband, partner and worker.

The night also honored some of the champions in our lives that play integral roles in our communities, especially in ways contribute to our areas of focus: youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. The Youth Development Award was given to Brother Carl Hardrick, a lifetime Hartford resident and member of the Wilson-Gray YMCA Youth and Family Center team who has dedicated his life to be an advocate and voice for Hartford's most at-risk youth. The Healthy Living Award was given to not a person, but an organization that plays a vital role in Greater Hartford: Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. Marcus McKinney, the regional vice president and chief health equity officer of Trinity Health of New England, accepted the award on behalf of the hospital, which partners with the YMCA of Greater Hartford on a number of initiatives, including our Diabetes Prevention Program and the REACH Coalition (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health). Our Social Responsibility Award was also given to an organization that plays a big role in all that we do: Travelers Company. Executive vice president Scott Higgins, who is also the president of Middle Market at Travelers and a member of the YMCA of Greater Hartford's Board of Trustees, accepted the award on behalf of Travelers, who was the recipient due to its long commitment to supporting key Y programs like our Youth Achievers and Power Scholars Academy.



Harold Sparrow, YMCA of Greater Hartford president and CEO; Scott Higgins, representing Travelers; Marcus McKinney, representing Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center; and Brother Carl Hardrick, a youth advocate in the North End of Hartford

During the Champions event, Tippet held a meet-and-greet with some of our guests, and then presented to everyone during dinner. In his speech, Tippet described the importance of the YMCA in his own life, particularly when he was growing up with a single mother and five siblings in a poverty-stricken area of Newark, New Jersey. Tippet said, "The Y played a big, big, big part in my life...anytime I see YMCA I think about all the good things that have come my way, how I've been saved in a lot of situations. So I'd like to say to you guys, continue your support of the YMCA, do all that you can. I've been very fortunate to be on that other side of that coin as someone who is very heavily involved in nonprofits and the community." He added that doing good work for the community "is such a psychological currency that ... makes you feel good."

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About The YMCA of Greater Hartford

The YMCA of Greater Hartford is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) charitable organization established in 1852 and is one of the nation's oldest YMCA's. The YMCA of Greater Hartford builds strong communities by helping individuals reach their fullest potential through transformative programs that promote Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility. We help people reach their fullest potential by: putting a caring adult in the presence of every child; being good stewards of the resources entrusted to us; and working in partnership to eliminate the disparities in health and education. In 2016 the YMCA of Greater Hartford served more than 120,000 people, including 66,000 children, in 52 towns and cities throughout the Hartford, Litchfield, Tolland and Windham counties. YMCA programs put the values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility into practice to build healthy spirit, mind and body for all participants. Ghymca.org

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