

UNITY IN DIVERSITY AWARD PRESENTATION

January 18, 2004

**Presented by the Rev. Roger Bertschausen,
Chairperson of Toward Community: Unity in Diversity and member of the Unity in
Diversity Award Committee**

In previous years the Unity in Diversity Award recipient was selected by vote of Toward Community's Executive Committee. This year, for the first time, an independent committee made up of both Toward Community members and other community leaders was established to select the Unity in Diversity recipient. You will find members of this committee listed in the order of service.

Our Committee had a very difficult task this year. We considered six nominees for the award—their names are also in the order of service. Each one of our nominees has done so much to bring different people in the Fox Valley together. I know that as we talked about each of the nominees, I thought that person should receive the award. I offer my congratulations to each of the nominees, and my deep thanks for all that they have contributed to our community.

After deciding we really couldn't present six co-winners, we made a selection for this year's Unity in Diversity Award. We chose a person who has quietly done a great deal for many years to make our community a more welcoming and caring place to live. In 2003, knowledge of her good work became more widespread as several of her projects came to fruition. This therefore feels like a particularly powerful moment to recognize the work of Dr. Bola Delano. On behalf of Toward Community, I am honored to announce the recipient of this year's Unity in Diversity award: Dr. Bola Delano.

There is so much that Bola has done to bring people together. I will lift up just two examples of her work. Bola was a founding member of African Heritage, an organization founded in 1998 that celebrates and educates about the rich cultural traditions of Africans and people of African descent. Bola served as the first Vice President of African Heritage. With the leadership of Bola among others, African Heritage celebrated a wonderful and widely noted milestone this year: the start of a scholarship program aimed at helping local African American students with their college expenses.

Another of Bola's efforts has also come to a noteworthy point of fruition: a multicultural center. For more than three years, Bola has led the effort to explore the possibility of opening a multicultural center. Her wise leadership has skillfully guided this idea from distant dream to reality. She has emphasized taking adequate time and care in laying the foundations for the center so that when the doors open—which they will do in the next few months—the center will be ready to take off. Bola led a year-long process of gathering grassroots ideas about the center, a process that collected the input of over 250 people in our community. Then using that input, she steered the Multicultural Center Coalition—a group of independent and outspoken people if there ever was one!—to a consensus on the mission and model of the multicultural center. And now the Fox Cities Rotary Multicultural Center is ready not only to open its doors, but to thrive for years and years to come. As a member of the Multicultural Center Coalition, I

can say that I think there is one person without whom the center would never have gone from good idea to reality: Dr. Bola Delano.

Bola is an effective and inspirational leader. She makes everyone feel welcome and important. She is a bridge builder. She holds and articulates a vision for a better community and world. She is tenacious. She is almost impossible to say no to. She is gracious. She offers just the right combination of nurture and challenge. She is a dreamer who knows how to make dreams become reality. She cares deeply about our community. She richly deserves this award.