



For Immediate Release

Feb. 5, 2008

Contact: LaToya Sutton
Communications Specialist
Office: (919) 516-4119
Fax: (919) 516-4360
E-mail: lmsutton@st-aug.edu

Saint Augustine's College honors three at Sapphire Gala

Raleigh, NC – Saint Augustine's College culminated its Founders' Week activities with its annual Sapphire Gala held Saturday, Feb. 2, at the North Raleigh Hilton.

The black-tie event, which benefits the College's scholarship fund, featured award presentations to acclaimed gospel artist Luther Barnes, who received the Theodore R. Gibson Legacy Award; Xavier University President Dr. Norman Francis, who received the Presidential Salutation; and Westside Preparatory School founder Marva Collins, who received the Heritage Award.

Barnes, in accepting his award, presented Saint Augustine's College President Dr. Dianne Boardley Suber with a \$2,500 donation for the school. He said he owes his alma mater for the success he enjoys today.

"Thirty-two years ago when I entered Saint Augustine's College, I was scared, withdrawn, shy, unsure of the future, and I didn't have a lot of friends here," Barnes said. "But I thank God for St. Aug, because without it, I don't think I would be where I am in gospel music."

Collins and Francis told their stories of beating the odds to achieve success. Collins took children who were deemed academic failures and helped them reach the potential most people didn't think the students had.

"I always feel like a hypocrite when I am honored for my work because I truly feel this is my calling on the earth," Collins said of her role as an educator. "I am the lucky one."

Francis, who lost his home in Hurricane Katrina, took on the task of rebuilding Xavier University after the storm ravaged Louisiana.

"The class of '06-'07 graduated on time," Francis said. "We are back because of hard work, determination and faith."

The classic R&B group, The Manhattans, closed the night with performances of some of their hit songs including "Shining Star" and "Kiss and Say Goodbye."

The Sapphire Gala raised more than \$50,000 for scholarships.