

70th Annual Humanitarian Tribute

William H. Backham, Jr. Community Service Award



Shirley R. Stancota
President & CEO

In the aftermath of the 1967 rebellion, New Detroit was formed to identify the root causes of bias and prejudice, to identify where structural and institutional racism occurs, and to eliminate racial inequity.

In a desire to rectify that situation, for the first time leaders from the corporate, civic, grassroots and faith communities sat down at the same table on an equal footing to work together.

As they worked together, many community leaders learned for the first time of discrimination that was rampant at all levels of life in this city. They came to realize they had not been paying attention to the quality of housing, to job discrimination, to police brutality and other manifestations of racial oppression that were endemic in the city.

In the intervening years, New Detroit has:

Been a catalyst in spurring public and private agencies to renew their commitment to ending discrimination, creating new opportunities and trying new ideas and new approaches to existing problems.

Spurred many Detroit area institutions to be more open and inclusive to all citizens regardless of their race or income.

Focused on Detroit's Police and Fire Departments, whose racial composition in 1967 was markedly out of proportion to the city's population, a significant hindrance to fostering good community relations. New Detroit pushed to revamp the selection process to make it more inclusive and held study sessions to help applicants prepare for tests to become officers and supervisors.

Assisted in the creation of new institutions that have become established as change agents in the community where none had existed before. (They include such entities as the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (DEGC), Black Family Development, The Michigan Minority Supplier Development Council (MMSDC), Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD), La SED and the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies at Wayne State University.)

Touched thousands of Detroit area residents with its programs focusing on youth development, job training, minority economic development, health, race relations and school improvement.