

FIRST MICHAEL BRUTON WORKPLACE SAFETY FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED

The Michael Bruton Workplace Safety Foundation (MBWSF) was formed in memory of the late Michael Bruton who, at the time of his death from cancer caused by exposure to asbestos in the workplace, was president of the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL). The CFL and the Bruton family believe that a foundation dedicated to promoting safety in the workplace is a fitting way to remember a person who dedicated a large portion of his life to promoting worker welfare.

In 2002, the Bruton Foundation branched out in a new direction by establishing a scholarship endowment with the UIC School of Public Health. Nearly 500 union leaders and supporters were on hand on April 26, 2002 at Teamsters Local 705 Hall when Dennis Gannon, MBWSF president and CFL secretary-treasurer, presented Dean Susan Scrimshaw the first check to establish the \$250,000 endowment.

Accompanying Gannon at the presentation were Marilyn Bruton, Michael Bruton's wife, and his son Tom Bruton, a member of the MBWSF Board of Directors.

"We are not too far down the road, maybe three or four more years, from obtaining the full endowment," Gannon said. "Each and every person and labor organization that has ever contributed to the MBWSF should feel very proud that they are carrying on the legacy of Michael Bruton by ensuring a safer workplace for all of our members."

The scholarship will be presented every fall in memory of Michael Bruton to a graduate student in the school's Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences (EOHS) Division. Trustees of the MBWSF will be part of the selection committee that will identify scholarship recipients.

Following the annual luncheon last April, the MBWSF board of directors and faculty from EOHS developed guidelines for the annual scholarship and invited EOHS students to apply. Representatives from the MBWSF and EOHS selected Lezah Brown-Ellington out of a field of five strong applicants as the first recipient of the annual award.

Born and raised on Chicago's South Side, Brown-Ellington is a single mother with three sons. After marriage, children and divorce, she decided it was time for a change and returned to graduate school in industrial hygiene at UIC. She has made public health a



Bill Gainer (SBC), Chicago Federation of Labor President Dennis Gannon, Tom Bruton, Marilyn Bruton, Reverend Gavin Quinn, scholarship recipient Lezah Brown-Ellington, Assistant Professor Serap Erdal (UIC SPH), Tim Bruton, Mike Fitzgerald (IBEW 134), Carl Galman (Steelworkers), and Mike O'Neill (Chicago Building Trades Council) celebrate first MBWSF award.

life-long passion and is currently finishing her Master of Science degree in public health and plans to continue on to work toward her PhD.

Brown-Ellington's résumé included a Bachelor of Science degree in environmental health and industrial hygiene from Purdue University, six years as the health and safety officer at Children's Hospital Medical Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, and seven years as a compliance officer and industrial hygienist with the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) in Cincinnati. One detail that caught the committee's attention was that her work with OSHA included two years as the American Federation of Governmental Employees' union steward.

The committee was also very impressed with Brown-Ellington's record of volunteer service, which includes the Delta Sigma Theta sorority, the American Industrial Hygiene Association, and the Boy Scouts of America.

At the annual MBWSF luncheon on April 25, 2003, Brown-Ellington told a packed hall of union supporters that "it brings me great pride to stand here, and I humbly accept this plaque for being the first Michael Bruton Scholar."

During her remarks, she explained what it means to be an industrial hygienist. "It means that I am trained in understanding and anticipating what environmental or occupational exposures may cause injury, illness, or death. In short, we clean up what no one else understands. In relation to occupational exposures, we would like to think that we are the apple a day that keeps the doctor away, or if the doctor should already be in the equation, we help to control what is causing the problem."

By Peter Scheff, PhD, CIH