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**THE MLK WAY**

City's tribute looks backward, forward

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Staff / Nathan Self

From left, Tamara Carrera accepts the 2012 Humanitarian Award from previous winner Melanie Noble-Couchman at Sandy Springs City Hall on Monday as Georgia Supreme Court Justice Harold D. Melton looks on.



The sermons of the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. are as relevant today as during the civil rights movement, speakers noted at the city of Sandy Springs' seventh annual King Day celebration Monday at City Hall.

Rabbi Eytan Kenter said King employed "prophetic leadership," with progress still to be made.

"May we work together to make the world a place where hatred, bigotry and indifference have no home," Kenter said. Georgia Supreme Court Justice Harold D. Melton gave the keynote address, asking listeners to delve deeper into King's "Dream" speech quote about whites and blacks sitting at the table of brotherhood.

"That was crazy talk at the time," Melton said.

However, King's metaphor of nonviolent social change remains practical, Christian and contemporary, Melton said, and progress has been made since King's assassination in 1968.

"This room is the table of brotherhood," he said. "The ability to come together, different races, different ages, 40 years afterward and celebrate community achievement represents the beauty of the table of brotherhood."

Melanie Noble-Couchman, winner of the 2011 Humanitarian Award, said her accomplishments "pale in comparison" to those of prior recipients Carolyn Axt, Lucy Hall-Gainer, Randi Passoff and Nancy

McCord.

"I accepted the award on behalf of all those who support nonprofits in Sandy Springs," Noble-Couchman said. "We have a great city and a great story to tell."

The two finalists for the 2012 award were Sandy Springs Mission Executive Director Felix Lora and Community Action Center Executive Director Tamara Carrera, with Carrera as the winner.

Carrera said although she lives in Marietta, she wanted to work at the Sandy Springs nonprofit providing emergency assistance for the working poor.

"I recognized that a community that cares for its neighbors is a community I wanted to participate in," she said. The third consecutive Sandy Springs Education Force board member to win the award, Carrera said she takes inspiration from her predecessors and the award's honoree.

"Great leaders like King change the world. The rest of us change the fabric of our lives, one small act of kindness at a time," she said.

The Rev. Henry Bush said the closing song related to Israelite slaves in Egypt, Plymouth Rock pioneers, civil rights activists and the founders of Sandy Springs.

"An oppressive Fulton County government did not want her to achieve," he said about Mayor Eva Galambos and the campaign to incorporate Sandy Springs. "She said, 'Deep in my heart, we shall overcome.'"