

African-American Achievers honored

By **RANDY ABRAHAM**
Special Correspondent

Four community leaders and a high school senior who overcame adversity to become a top student were honored at the recent annual African-American Achievers awards ceremony.

Nearly 1,000 attended the event, sponsored by JM Family Enterprises, Southeast Toyota Distributors and JM Lexus and staged at the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center.

The education award went to **James Griffin**, a career teacher who has championed academic excellence through his Algebra U project, an accelerated path for high school-level math, and promoted college readiness and vocational aptitudes.

"This award gives me a platform and a voice," he said. "Three people have already come forward since the award and offered to work hand in hand with us; none of that would have been possible without this award."

The four adult winners received a \$10,000 contribution to the charity of their choice. Griffin chose Free the Children, an international group that builds schools overseas.

"I'm not going to be a billionaire, but maybe I can help a billion lives," he said.

Marshall Davis, managing director for the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center in Miami, won in the art and culture category.

"Over 22 years, this award has identified some really notable people, and to be recognized as one of those gives me positive feelings about what



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The 2014 African-American Achievers with JM Family President and CEO Colin Brown and Jan Moran, chairwoman and president of the Jim Moran Foundation, are, from left, standing, Marshall Davis, James Griffin and Kenny Alexis, and seated, Barbara Sharief and Estella Pyfrom.

I've done for the community," he said.

Davis plans to split his prize evenly between the Spiritual Guidance Temple of Truth, a Pompano Beach church his grandmother helped establish, and the African heritage center, where it will help develop a computer arts program.

Broward Mayor **Barbara Sharief**, who built up a health care business, won in the business and entrepreneur category.

"Sometimes we struggle to find role models we can look up to, and this award provides role models to the community," said Sharief, who selected the Susan B. Anthony Recovery Center as the recipient of her prize money.

Estella Pyfrom, who won the award for community service, invested her pension earned from a 50-year career teaching in Palm Beach County to fund a campaign to promote education, school

readiness and computer skills. Her Brilliant Bus mobile education center, which she designed, is hooked up to the Internet and outfitted with other learning tools, and she brings education services to the community — to more than 20,000 students to date.

"This will help me to expand my program with additional curriculum," she said. "... It lets me know that good deeds do not go unnoticed, that good people are behind the cause, and that people can see that a poor girl who grew up in the projects, a black girl with ambition, can succeed."

In addition, **Kenny Alexis**, a senior at Blanche Ely High School who also takes classes at Broward College, received the Jerome Edmund Gray Youth Achiever award. Five years ago, he and his sister emigrated from Haiti. The award comes with a scholarship to Florida State University, where Alexis has already been accepted.