

Palm Beach State to honor four at MLK celebration Jan. 12

*The recipients of the Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Awards are: **D’atra Franklin**, a fall 2011 Palm Beach State graduate and former foster care youth who has been advocating for those in foster care; **Mark Hansen**, a former school board member and Palm Beach State alumnus; **Carlton “Ricky” Wade**, owner of “B”ing The Best, the franchise for 11 McDonald’s restaurants in Palm Beach County; and **El Sol, Jupiter’s Neighborhood Resource Center***

(Lake Worth, Fla. – Jan. 9, 2012) D’atra Franklin’s mother died when she was seven years old, forcing her to help fend for herself and grow up fast.

After moving from relative to relative and friend to friend most of her childhood, she ended up in the state foster care system at 17. But it was through the foster care system that Franklin obtained stable housing and other resources to help keep her on the path to completing high school and going to college.

Now 22, she is on a mission to help other youth in foster care. For her work, Franklin, who received her Associate in Arts degree from Palm Beach State in December and is now enrolled at Florida Atlantic University to pursue a bachelor’s degree in education, is among the recipients of four Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Awards. The awards will be presented Jan. 12 during the College’s 13th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Breakfast. Jeff Johnson, an MSNBC contributor and White House correspondent for TheGrio.com, will be the keynote speaker.



“I feel very blessed,” said Franklin, who will receive the award in the student category. “I’m really honored to be associated with such a prestigious award. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was an influential man, a great man who was a hero to many people, and to have my name attached to his, I’m at a loss for words.”

Since aging out of foster care at 18, she has been actively involved with Florida Youth Shine, a statewide youth-led organization that meets regularly to identify the challenges and successes of life within the child welfare system. Franklin helped advocate for several Florida foster care bills that have been signed into law, and over the last year, she has played an active role in FYS's drive to support the redesign of the state's Independent Living program that works to support all former foster youth from the age of 18 to 23 years old. As a Florida Youth Shine chapter representative, she travels the state sharing the stories of her peers in Palm Beach County, and has appeared in the media to discuss foster care issues.

Also being honored are:

- **Mark Hansen** (Alumni), a former Palm Beach County School Board member who, through his books and service, is committed to helping and empowering youth
- **Carlton "Ricky" Wade** (Individual), a franchisee of 11 McDonald's restaurants in Palm Beach County whose business presence and personal involvement has enriched youth in the community
- **El Sol**, Jupiter's neighborhood resource center (Organization) that provides services for immigrants and low-income individuals in the community



For more information on the honorees, visit www.palmbeachstate.edu/mlk.xml.

Editor's note: Contact College Relations and Marketing for photos of the honorees.

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