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Program honors MLK, city's peacemakers

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Carl Hudgins had plenty of tips for Garden City Mayor Jaylee Lynch on how to deliver her State of the City address next week.

"First, you've got to be loud and clear, so everyone can hear you," the 12-year-old Memorial Elementary student told Lynch. "Second, do not be scared. And remember to say it in the best way you can."

Hudgins was speaking from experience. Moments earlier, he had received a standing ovation for his reading of portions of Dr. Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* speech as part of the Garden City Foundation for Educational Excellence's Peacemakers Program on Monday.

"I knew he would do well because he has the best teacher, his mom," said his father Carl, watching his son pose for photographs with his young cousins. "She makes sure he does everything well."

"He did a beautiful job," said his mother,

Vonzelle, a member of the district's Diversity Committee.

The program, which replaced the foundation's annual Peacemakers Breakfast, was highlighted by the awarding of the first ever Dr. Francis Schmitt Peacemakers Award to longtime peace activist Shirley Gumina.

"I was under the impression I was here to honor Francis Schmitt," said a surprised Gumina. "I know he would be happy about this and I know this had to partly his idea."

The award, given to a person who lives or works in Garden City and makes a significant contribution to the betterment of the community, honors Dr. Schmitt, an original member of the Diversity Committee and "a living example of a caring person and a peacemaker," said Curriculum Director Susan Collins.

"Shirley Gumina is a caring, accepting and humanistic person who greatly deserves the honor of Garden City's first recipient of the Francis Schmitt Peacemaker's Award," Collins said. "She is a true peacemaker in the manner in which she lives her life."

A longtime Garden City resident and a retired Garden City education, Gumina is presently advocating for the creation of a Cabinet-level Department of Peace to promote international dialogue among people of all nationalities, heritages, religions and perspectives.

"Shirley's rationale is that it would shift our thinking," Collins said. "We have a Department of War, so she believes we need to think peace."

Gumina also has been active in the community. She is a member of the Garden City Kiwanis which has children in need as its focus, and has been involved in helping children with differing abilities, another component of diversity, Collins added.

For several years, Gumina has participated in the Peacemakers events, reading her peace poem. She did so again Monday, telling the audience that people need to learn about peace in the cradle and take that message to the playground, schools, state, nation and the world.

"I think all of us at some point have heard that charity begins at home. Well, peace also starts at home," she said. "Peace will find you, but remember who the steward of the earth is. This is a loan, it has not been given to us."

The program also featured performances by the Douglas Elementary Glee Club and Crystal Bell Choir, but it was Carl who stole the show, sounding very much like Martin Luther King as he did an encore of the closing portion of the speech.

"My mom told me to go up there and say it in his voice and southern drawl and when you do he will live again," Carl said. "Martin Luther King never dies, he lives over and over again when we remember his words."
