

## A Positive Role Model and Mentor, Okotie-Eboh is Honored as Newest Michigan's Children Hero

**November 26, 2018, DETROIT, MI** – As she was being honored for her positive impact on the lives of young people, Juliette Okotie-Eboh kept her responses real and personal. The newest Heroes Night honoree by Michigan's Children delivered an unscripted 45-minute guide for living a good life prompted by questions from five teens and young adults who joined her on a ballroom stage inside the MGM Grand Casino. They asked her for advice geared to young professional women and more. Who inspires you? How do you keep going? What are the biggest problems facing Detroit?

With an audience of business and community leaders listening in last Monday night, Okotie-Eboh delivered her answers in a warm, witty and decisive manner. Advice for young professional women? "Don't let anyone tell you to wait your turn. You have to be patient but don't spend *your* time lining up behind five other people before you have your day in the sun," she said. "You have to be prepared when get out there and you have to be willing to stand your ground. Be aggressive in pursuing your goals."

While women face particular challenges – a glass ceiling "that's real" and earnings that are significantly lower than men – they should realize that there are no egalitarian societies anywhere in the world. At least America's laws regarding discrimination are on their side, she said. "Everyone has something to grapple with," she added. "There's always something going to be an impediment and something that will give you an advantage as well."

**Okatie-Eboh, a loyal Detroiter** who grew up on the city's east side, said pleasing her parents motivated her to achieve her personal best in her younger years, but later she learned, "Affirmation doesn't necessarily come when you want it or need it. So get over being afraid. Get it out there. Give yourself a pep talk. I've learned to perfect that."

The students came from Hazel Park, Southfield and Detroit, with big dreams of their own. Justin, a Southfield Regional Academic High junior, plans to pursue a broadcasting career. Alexandria, a senior at Hazel Park High, is going to college in the fall to become a sign language interpreter. Arielle, a Wayne State University freshman, is planning to major in music, and Alaiya, a junior at Hazel Park Advantage Alternative School, plans to become a nurse. Markita is a Wayne State University graduate and former child from foster care who founded and operates a pet-sitting service.

The young people represented two Detroit programs: The New Foster Care, which works to increase awareness and make an impact in the foster care system, and The Hazel Park Promise Zone and College Access Network, which works to revitalize the Detroit suburb by increasing its educational attainment and making it an attractive destination for families through a tuition-free path to an associate's degree. Walker-Fobbs, Executive Director for The New Foster Care and Kayla Roney Smith, Executive Director of the Hazel Park Promise Zone and College Access Network, served as hosts for the evening.

Clearly, Okotie-Eboh enjoyed the exchange as much as the youth. "This is a very exhilarating discussion," she said smiling at one point.

**Okotie-Eboh has served** in a variety of roles mentoring women and young people in their careers, and has served on many civic boards, as well as the nonprofit Michigan's Children. Today, she is a senior vice president for the MGM Grand Detroit, but it's only the latest of a long list of varied top-level occupations. Earlier in her career, she worked as an urban planner for the city of Detroit, completing two decades of service, and later going on to work in healthcare, banking and international business.

Telling the youth they shouldn't overly fret about finding the perfect first job – because they'll have a half dozen careers in a long life – she said her guiding principle was finding work that was personally intriguing and challenging. One should always be prepared with marketable skills that will earn them a living, she added.

"We all have our challenges. I try to keep a very good sense of humor about all this because life is not all that serious. You should approach the whole work and education piece with the zest and fun you deserve. The better educated you are the more flexibility you have. Make life as fun as you can make it."

During the evening, Okotie-Eboh was presented with an original artwork created by a young artist, Brandon Foster. The choice of the piece as an honor was inspired by Okotie-Eboh's love of music and featured a young child surrounded by musical symbols.

The event hosts were also presented with original artwork by artists at Hazel Park High School, continuing Michigan's Children's tradition of supporting local young talent.