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# Latinas Unidas recognizes area leaders

SRUTHI GOTTIPATI • STAFF WRITER • NOVEMBER 12, 2010

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More than 200 people gathered for the Reconocimiento Awards luncheon at Hyatt Regency hotel Thursday to recognize the contributions of local Latino women. The awards, held annually by Latinas Unidas, a Hispanic women's organization in Rochester, are in their 17th year.



Darin Price and Jazmin Lantigua w ith the Essence of Rhythm Latin Dance Co. perform a Bachata dance at the Reconocimiento Awards. (SHAWN DOWD staff photographer)

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"It shows that there's a strong Latino presence in Rochester," said Diana M. Irizarry, 56, who received the volunteer achievement award. Irizarry, who was described as having a distinguished legal career standing up for the rights of women and children in need, said the award meant recognition from her community.

Other categories for the award were leadership service, career achievement, and a young Latina leader award. They were given to Marisol Ramos-Lopez, who has worked on increasing awareness about sexual abuse victims; Sara Pabon Jordon for overcoming adversities and inspiring others; and Nicolette Kane for her commitment to education and community service.

"They're role models for all of us," said Elisa De Jesus, vice president of Latinas Unidas' board.

Thursday's awards luncheon was interspersed with performances of Afro-Cuban, Salsa Rueda, Mambo and Bachata by Essence of Rhythm Latin Dance Co.

"We like to add a bit of Latino culture to these events," said Melisa Vega, a member of the awards committee.

Irizarry's advice to young Latinas? To work hard and be motivated.

"They have to be willing to take advantage of the opportunities offered to them even though it takes them out of their comfort zone."

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