



**Commissioner Nick Fish**  
City of Portland

**December 7, 2016**

**Steve Lowenstein Trust Award**

Time Certain: 9:45 am (15 minutes)

Introduction by: Commissioner Nick Fish

Summary:

This is the twenty-sixth annual Steve Lowenstein Trust Award. The award was created to recognize individuals who make an extraordinary personal effort and sacrifice to improve the quality of life for distressed and vulnerable populations in the city of Portland.

Presented by:

Michelle Harper, Outgoing Steve Lowenstein Board Chair  
Joe Hertzberg, Incoming Steve Lowenstein Board Chair

Invited Testimony:

Leigh Bohannon, Award Recipient  
Aasha Benton, Award Recipient  
Keisha Thomas, Award Recipient

## 2016 STEVE LOWENSTEIN AWARD

HONOREES: Leigh Bohannon, Aasha Benton, Dr. Keisha Thomas – Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Portland Alumnae Chapter

**Leigh Bohannon** is a native Oregonian. She attended Grant High School and graduated from Alabama A&M University in 2006. Since returning to Portland, she has devoted much of her time to working to improve the lives of the less fortunate in Portland, mostly through the Portland Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta as co-chair of Delta GEMS.

**Aasha Benton** is co-chair of the GEMS program. She is also a certified Zumba instructor and donates her time teaching classes throughout the community to help provide physical activity to build a strong heart and body.

**Keisha Thomas, PhD**, is an electrical engineer originally from Brooklyn, NY. Since moving to Portland, she has volunteered with the Portland Alumnae Chapter's Dr. Betty Shabazz Academy. She has also mentored youth in after-school, summer camps, and other STEM-based programs for over 15 years.

The three honorees volunteer to lead the Dr. Betty Shabazz Delta Academy. **The Portland Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.** has been a pillar of Portland's black community since 1945. Its 250 college-educated members have lived on the front line of African American and women's civil rights and social justice issues. The Chapter provides an extensive array of public service initiatives through its Five-Point Program Thrust of Economic Development, Educational Development, International Awareness and Involvement, Physical and Mental Health, and Political Awareness and Involvement.

The Delta Academy was created out of an urgent sense that bold action was needed to save our young females (ages 11 - 14) from the perils of academic failure, low self-esteem, and crippled futures. The Academy enriches and enhances the education that our young teens receive in public schools, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Dr. Keisha Thomas meets with the participants bi-weekly with assistance from other chapter members.

Delta GEMS (Growing and Empowering Myself Successfully) is a natural outgrowth and expansion of the Dr. Betty Shabaaz Delta Academy, created to capture the dreams of African American at-risk, adolescent girls aged 14-18. Delta GEMS provides a framework to actualize those dreams through activities that provide opportunities for self-reflection and individual growth, develop a Can-Do attitude, and offer a road map for college and career planning. All high school seniors that have participated have graduated, and most of them have gone on to colleges and universities.

Both programs emphasize personal development, self-esteem, bonding with peers, academic enrichment, and community service. Partners have included Big Brother Big Sister, Black Parent Initiative, Black United Fund, Martin Luther King Day of Service, and Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure.

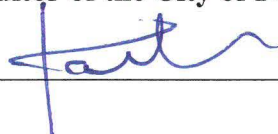
Recognize Leigh Bohannon, Aasha Benton, Dr. Keisha Thomas – Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Portland Alumnae Chapter as the recipients of the 2016 Steve Lowenstein Trust Award  
(Presentation introduced by Commissioner Fish)

DEC 07 2016

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Filed NOV 29 2016

**MARY HULL CABALLERO**  
Auditor of the City of Portland

By 

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Novick		
Hales		