

WITH APPRECIATION

Michigan Architectural Foundation Hosts First Annual Donor Appreciation Event

Michigan Architectural Foundation (MAF) recently held its first Donor Appreciation Event at Detroit's Guardian Building. The purpose of the event, called 'What is it About Architecture?', was to thank MAF's donors and supporters and celebrate with those who share a common love of Michigan architecture, the built environment, and the importance of nurturing future architects and stewards of architecture.

"MAF's donors have been the lifeblood behind the foundation's growth and continued strength over the years," said Tom Mathison, FAIA, MAF President. "Without not only their financial support, but also their time and passion for Michigan architecture, none of what MAF does would be possible."

Event guests mingled on the 32nd floor of the Art Deco Guardian Building, with spectacular views of Detroit and the Detroit River. The event also featured tours of the building conducted by Michael Smith, a historian at the University of Michigan Bentley Library and author of the book "Designing Detroit" which features the work of architect Wirt Rowland, who designed the Guardian Building and many other landmarks in the city.

"The event, and spirit of the occasion, was a great opportunity to connect donors and guests with one another," said Mathison. "Everyone had the chance to meet this year's MAF scholarship winners, and to learn more about what MAF is doing and has planned for the future. We were able to announce this year's winner of the Evans Graham Preservation Award before the public announcement, and we had a chance to hear a personal story of giving from one of MAF's most generous donors, Jeanne Graham."

Photos top to bottom: MAF donor Jeanne Graham addresses the audience; longtime MAF board member and MAF Scholarship Committee co-chair Les Tinknell, FAIA; MAF President Tom Mathison thanks MAF donors and supporters for their dedication to advancing awareness of the importance of architecture.





Photos top to bottom: architects Tamara Burns, FAIA and Gene Hopkins, FAIA, talk with MAF scholarship winners; MAF board members Carl Roehling, FAIA, Park Smith, AIA, and Bob Washer, Hon. Aff. AIA; and 2018 MAF Scholarship Winners: top row (l to r) Eric Minton, Matthew Northcott, Anthony Botezatu, and Salvatore Lorenzano. Bottom row (l to r): Juan Arias-Hernandez, Jasmine Almomar, Ayomide Okunlola, and Alyssa Monroe (not pictured: Jade Pyman).

MAF was founded 61 years ago, catalyzed by an initiative to help to restore the Biddle House on Mackinaw Island, which dates to the 18th century fur trade. The project was a success and spurred MAF to raise funds to sponsor other special projects. The first donors were primarily Michigan architects, but over time, the circle has grown to include other friends and fans of architecture.

Since then, MAF supporters have helped fund many programs, including an architectural design curriculum for K-5 school students; public awareness grants that creatively connect people with architecture through award-winning documentary films, a major publication of great architecture of Michigan, camps and programs for children and adults, and more; architecture book collections; scholarships for architecture students; and the Evans Graham Preservation Award, a major annual grant designed to support communities and organizations who are preserving important Michigan architecture.

"I think everyone left the event knowing something new or having a deeper appreciation for all that MAF does," said Mathison. "That was one of the goals of this event, and one of the most fun parts about the evening. Prior to the event, I doubt if many knew that MAF administers ten architectural scholarships, and that the size of the awards grows each year. Many did not know that the Evans Graham Preservation Grant is larger than ever, thanks to the generous donations of patrons, or how MAF supports urban youth to understand and appreciate their environment, or that MAF continues to expand its reach through electronic communication and social media."

MAF's newest initiatives include an interactive-format donor packet designed to acquaint potential donors with the foundation and share stories of those who have benefitted from MAF-supported programs; new MAF videos on YouTube; and an increased social and digital news presence, with more relevant information than ever for its audiences. This summer, MAF will roll out a new web site that will make it easier to connect with the organization and participate in programs and fundraisers. "It has been fantastic to see the awareness and interest in MAF grow each year, both from our expanded donor circle as well as the public," said Mathison.

"We intend for this to be an annual event, and to hold it in different locations around the state, always with the idea of hosting it in places with special architectural appeal," said Mathison. "The event may take different forms, but always will be with the intent of thanking our donors in a special way. And of course, we will continue to honor and thank our supporters, through one-on-one contact and in person, through events like this. We can't wait until next year!"