



Contact: P. Andrews-Keenan
312-206-2821
PKeenan@TallulahGroup.com

Kaitz Foundation's "Diversity in the Digital Age" raises 1.6M for industry diversity programs

34th Annual Fundraising Dinner featured appearances by Sean Combs, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and "Insecure" co-star Yvonne Orji

(NEW YORK) – 10.2.17 –The **Brooklyn United Marching Band** helped set the stage for an inspiring **34th Annual Walter Kaitz Foundation's** Fundraising Dinner last Wednesday. Their rousing 'drum line' was just one of the surprises of the evening, where more than \$1.6M was raised to support diversity and inclusion programs in the telecommunications industry. The celebration held at New York's Marriott Marquis honored **HBO** and **Girls Who Code (GWC)**.

Comedian Nick Guerra welcomed the audience, and was joined by **Yvonne Orji**, co-star on the hit HBO series "**Insecure**," who shared her own story of being a Nigerian immigrant to the country. **Sean 'Diddy' Combs**, founder, CEO and majority owner of Revolt TV, discussed the responsibility he, and the entire cable industry has to spread the 'diversity gospel.' "Our work is very, very important and we have to continue to change the narrative. As we celebrate diversity tonight, I'm asking everyone here to challenge yourself to do more, and remember this is not about charity, it is about opportunity."

Dinner co-chairs Pat **Esser**, president, Cox Communications, and **Ken Lowe**, chairman, president & CEO, Scripps Networks Interactive, offered that today the industry produces more content, showcases more talent, takes bolder risks with programming, and encourages diversity in all aspects of media production, both behind the scenes and on camera.

The duo presented the **Diversity Advocate Award** to Girls Who Code's founder **Reshma Saujani** who thanked those companies in the room who are already partners with GWC. The organization has over 1000 Girls Who Code clubs across America and runs summer and after school programs which teach computing and programming skills to girls from the sixth to the twelfth grades. Her message was that technology has opened opportunities to change the world and solve real problems. "When you teach girls to code, they come up with ideas that are going to change the world", said Saujani. "Our GWC girls create projects that make an impact, from games tackling period stigma, to apps about the water crisis in Flint, to microprocessors that make guns safer."

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. professor of African American Studies at Harvard University offered some very personal remarks in his presentation to HBO's **Richard Plepler**, the evening's Diversity Champion. The two have worked together over many years to share diverse stories. "HBO has

long been a champion of diversity and inclusion through both their bold programming and their diverse workforce,” said Gates. “They foster a professional environment that values divergent voices and encourages innovative thinking.” Plepler, in accepting the award on behalf of HBO, encouraged the audience to continue to strive on behalf of everyone for the ideals that the country was built on of equality and respect for all.

This fund raised at the event support the programs and initiatives of three key industry organizations: The **Emma L. Bowen Foundation**, the **National Association for Multi-ethnicity in Communications (NAMIC)**, and **Women in Cable Telecommunications (WICT)**. During his remarks **David Porter**, executive director of the Walter Kaitz Foundation, discussed the recently released data from WICT’s PAAR and NAMIC’s AIM surveys and how they provide a blueprint for continuous improvement for diversity within the industry. “We know what gets measured, gets done,” said Porter. He went on to talk about some of the key findings of the reports that show that mentoring and retention efforts will help move the needle for women and people of color in the telecommunications industry.

Joining Lowe and Esser on the dinner committee were **Rocco Commisso**, chairman and CEO, Mediacom Communications Corp.; **Nancy Dubuc**, president & CEO, A&E Networks; **John Evans**, chairman & CEO, Evans Telecommunications Company; **Peter Rice**, chairman & CEO, Fox Networks Group; **Richard Sjoberg**, president & CEO, Sjoberg’s, Inc.; **Robert Stanzione**, executive chairman, ARRIS; and **David Zaslav**, president & CEO, Discovery Communications.

About the Walter Kaitz Foundation

The Walter Kaitz Foundation stands at the center of the cable industry’s long-standing commitment to diversity as it seeks to advance the contributions of women and multi-ethnic professionals in cable. Through the funds we raise, the organizations we support, and the programs we produce, the Walter Kaitz Foundation serves as a catalyst for increasing diversity in cable in three areas – its workforce, its supplier base and its programming.

About HBO

Home Box Office, Inc., the premium television programming subsidiary of Time Warner Inc., is the world’s most successful pay TV service, providing the two television services – HBO® and Cinemax® – to approximately 134 million subscribers worldwide.

About Girls Who Code

Girls Who Code is a national non-profit organization working to close the gender gap in technology. Through its Summer Immersion Program and Clubs, Girls Who Code is leading the movement to inspire, educate, and equip young women with the computing skills to pursue 21st century opportunities. By the end of year, Girls Who Code will have reached 40,000 girls in every US state. Additional information is available at www.girlswhocode.com.

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