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WMass activist to be feted in D.C.

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By JO-ANN MORIARTY

jo-ann.moriarty@newhouse.com WASHINGTON - Springfield-based activist Caroline Murray will be honored this week at a gala celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Center for Community Change. The grass-roots organization was founded as a living memorial to the slain civil rights leader and presidential hopeful, Robert F. Kennedy.

Murray will be honored along with U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill.; William S. White, president of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and Taryn Higashi of the Ford Foundation.

The honorary hosts for the gala will include Ethel Kennedy, widow of the late U.S. senator and mother of their 11 children; U.S. Rep. John R. Lewis, D-Georgia, the son of sharecroppers who became a civil rights leader and participant in the 1960s freedom rides, and Julian Bond, chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Murray is the executive director of the Alliance to Develop Power, formerly the Anti-Displacement Project. She developed the agency from its original mission of assisting tenants into a member-based organization that has successfully retained 1,400 apartment units as affordable housing - valued at \$45 million - from being turned into market rent housing.

Under her direction, the alliance, based at 130 Union St. in Springfield's South End, expanded its scope to protect workers from being exploited. It eventually opened two worker-controlled businesses that have created living-wage jobs and recently completed more than \$2 million worth of sales.

The organization has worked throughout Western Massachusetts on housing, immigration, and labor issues.

"The heart and soul of the ADP are the community leaders and members who work every day to create a society that reflects our shared community values, and that is centered in justice and opportunity for all," Murray said last week. "Every day, people who take extraordinary risks in speaking truth to power and who give countless hours to the betterment of our society."

Last summer, the organization changed its name to the Alliance to Develop Power, and opened the area's only low-wage and immigrant-worker center that was successful in securing \$300,000 in restitution for workers.

The agency also maintains a food distribution network and three community centers.

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