Roca celebrates year’s accomplishments at annual breakfast

Roca’s annual breakfast welcomed a packed house of local officials and supporters at the Intercontinental Hotel, including Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey, Glenn D. Martin, Founder and President of Jodi Annokol e Pius A. Kanu, Commissioner of Police, and President of the Massachusetts Major City Chiefs, and Massachusetts Secretary of Housing and Economic Development, Jay Ash.

“I’m a longtime supporter of Roca. I very much believe in what Roca is doing to change the lives of young people. They’ve done a tremendous job and she really is a part of the solution that was missing for so long,” said Ash. Highlights from the event included a panel discussion with Healey, Martin, and A. Kanu, where they discussed the three biggest issues impacting the high-risk, youth people Roca works with — immigration, incarceration, and policing.

“If we had to wear two hats — number one being police officer, then later, being a federal immigration officer — we would not get the trust of our residents. We should not have complications our jobs by wearing those two hats,” commented A. Kanu. “Trust is so important between police departments and the communities we serve.”

Roca’s annual breakfast also honored Vichey Phoung Award recipient Kerry Gutierrez, and ROCA staff members Jennifer Murray, Allie Maynard, and Sylvia Ruiz. ROCA’s annual breakfast also honored Vichey Phoung Award recipient Kerry Gutierrez, and ROCA staff members Jennifer Murray, Allie Maynard, and Sylvia Ruiz.

Roca in its efforts to help the highest-risk youth in our communities build a better future for themselves and their families,” said Roger Crainall, Chairman, President and CEO, MassMutual, who served as breakfast chair. “Roca’s work is truly admirable and their ability to consistently achieve meaningful results is a tremendous benefit to both the young people they serve and the Commonwealth.”

Roca works with hundreds of high-risk, young people every year. The organization serves 17- to 24-year-old men who are determined high-risk by validated criminal justice risk assessments and are not ready, willing and able to participate in programs or jobs. Using Roca’s five-year Intervention Model, they help young men stay out of harm’s way and go to work. With its High-Risk Young Men’s Program, Roca runs the nation’s largest Pay for Success (Social Impact Bonds) project to date. The Massachusetts Juvenile Justice Pay for Success Initiative improves the lives of over 1000 young men, while reducing crime, promoting safer communities and saving taxpayer dollars.

In 2016, Roca was privileged to work with 711 young men, with 76 percent of them staying with Roca throughout the year 79 percent of those participants had no new arrests, and Roca helped place 270 young men in their traditional employment program. Another 105 young men were placed in a job, with 88 percent holding that job for six or more months.

Although Roca is always looking for new solutions for older boys and preparing for that next generation, the annual breakfast serves to look back on the year. The organization closed the year with 79 percent of young men and women staying with Roca throughout the year. 79 percent of those participants had no new arrests, and Roca helped place 270 young men in their traditional employment program. Another 105 young men were placed in a job, with 88 percent holding that job for six or more months.