

Landlords get high marks

Queen's presents Robert Reid with Key to the Ghetto

By Jennifer Pritchett
Whig-Standard Staff Writer

JUST THREE YEARS AFTER THE FIRST Golden Cockroach Award was handed out, the Queen's University Alma Mater Society has eliminated the need for a public shaming award for Kingston's worst student landlord.

At least for now.

Yesterday, the student government announced there would be no Golden Cockroach Award this year because not a single landlord in the student ghetto was bad enough to receive such a damning title.

Instead, all the attention was placed on one of the city's best landlords, Robert Reid, who was this year's winner of the Key to the Ghetto Award.

"He's one of the great landlords out there. I haven't heard anyone say a bad word about him," said Kaitlyn Young, municipal affairs commissioner for the AMS.

Yesterday, she made the announcement at the student centre before stu-



Kingston student housing landlord Robert Reid (right) accepts the Key to the Ghetto Award from Kaitlyn Young of the Queen's Alma Mater Society.

dents, city councillors Ed Smith and Bill Glover, city CAO Glen Laubenstein and the media.

"We didn't find a single landlord that met the standards set in the previous

two years for the Golden Cockroach Award. There will be no cockroach award this year," she said.

Young said the student government felt it would be irresponsible to label a landlord with Golden Cockroach Award title if it wasn't truly deserved because of the negative publicity and impact the designation can have.

And so, the Golden Cockroach trophy, which sports a gold-painted stag beetle on the top, can collect dust until next year.

The AMS launched the Golden Cockroach Award three years ago in an effort to publicly embarrass landlords into abiding by minimum property standards. At that time, there had been numerous complaints from students about poor, and sometimes unsafe, living conditions in some off-campus housing for Queen's students.

The results for this year's nominations appear to show the awards are having the desired effect.

Please see 'WE STILL,' Page 8

'We still have things to work on'

Continued from Page 1

Key to the Ghetto recipient Reid told the crowd yesterday he was pleased to be receiving such an award and stressed the fact that he is one of many good landlords in town.

"If you provide quality accommodation, respond to tenant needs and respect them, they will take care of the property and return that respect," he said. "Like a lot of things, it's a two-way street."

Reid owns about a dozen rental properties in town that house more than 100 tenants, most of whom are students.

Young hopes that by not handing out the Golden Cockroach Award this year, it doesn't convey a message that there aren't any issues with sub-standard housing in the student neighbourhood.

"I don't want to give the impression that the problems have all been solved ... we still have things to work on," she said.

The AMS revealed a video yesterday to illustrate some of those remaining problems, which include mould and a leaking pipe that was so bad the tenants had to use umbrellas to keep the water off themselves in their kitchen.

Another problem highlighted in the video was a group of students who had to be evacuated from their apartment when city property standards inspected it to find that the furnace was so old and unsafe that it emitted eight times the accepted levels of carbon monoxide.

This year, the AMS received 33 nominations for both the Golden Cockroach Award and the Key to the Ghetto Award. The majority, 22 nominations, were for the Key to the Ghetto Award.

The AMS's Kaitlyn Young said the number of nominations for both awards were down this year compared to the previous two years. She also said competition for the Key to the Ghetto was stiff.

Last year, landlords John and Richard McNevin of Kingont Investments received the Key to the Ghetto award. Phil Lam was bestowed the Golden Cockroach Award.

In 2006, Kingston landlord Jay Abramsky of Keystone Property Management was awarded the Key to the Ghetto Award, while Lam received the Golden Cockroach Award. Another Kingston landlord, Peter Holmes, was runner-up to Lam.

jpritchett@thewhig.com