



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 11, 2017

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VCIC ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF 50TH ANNUAL LYNCHBURG HUMANITARIAN AWARDS

*2017 Lynchburg Humanitarian Awards Dinner presented by the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities
June 1, 2017 at Lynchburg College*

(Lynchburg, VA) - The Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2017 Humanitarian Awards. This 50th presentation of the awards by the Lynchburg Chapter of VCIC will be held on Thursday, June 1, 2017, at Lynchburg College. The awards celebration honors individuals and organizations for making significant humanitarian contributions to the greater Lynchburg community.

The 2017 VCIC Lynchburg Award Recipients

Richard N. Edwards, Jr. has been actively involved in his community for all of his professional life. After retiring from AREVA in 2005, Rick has spent time recruiting leadership for the Habitat Board of Directors, raising funds and building houses. His first volunteer experience with Habitat for Humanity was the Jimmy Carter Blitz Build in 1987. Thirty years later, Rick has been a part of over 200 builds and currently serves as the Board President for the Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity, which will be celebrating their 300th home in 2017. Mr. Edwards has been active in churches as a deacon, deacon chair, moderator, Sunday school teacher, and Habitat crew leader. He also served as president of the Lynchburg Symphony Orchestra from 2009-2012.

Alice T. Mabry worked as a special education teacher in Lynchburg City Schools for over 20 years prior to her retirement. Post "retirement", she served as a volunteer continuing education director for the Virginia University of Lynchburg for 15 years. A 2008 recipient of the Lynchburg's Mayor's Award of Excellence, one of Alice's passions has been her work on the collection of the Legacy Museum. In addition, she served with the March of Dimes campaign and the local NAACP, and she is a past president of the Lynchburg Chapter of the Links. Ms. Mabry is an active member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Lynchburg Chapter and Diamond Hill Baptist Church.

Mort Sajadian is Founder, President, and Chief Executive Officer of Amazement Square, The Rightmire Children's Museum. He has more than 30 years of university and children's museum experience and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Association of Children's Museums. In 2016, Dr. Sajadian was appointed by President Obama to serve on the National Museum and Library Services Board. Under his leadership, Amazement Square was a 2015 Recipient of the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. Mort is actively involved in the soccer community and serves as West Area Director of Assessors for the Metro DC-Virginia State Referee Program.

Marjette G. Upshur has spent the last twelve years serving the City of Lynchburg as the Director of Economic Development. She currently serves on the regional Workforce Development Board, the Lynchburg Chapter for the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, and on the Virginia Community Capital Advocacy Council. Ms. Upshur has also chaired the boards of CASA of Central Virginia, Rotary Club of Lynchburg and the United Way of Central Virginia. She was recently named a finalist for the national NextGen Public Service Awards, an award that recognizes deserving individuals who are intelligent, exuberant and dedicated to improving government.

In addition, VCIC will present one special award this year:

Dennis S. Roberts will receive the **Jeffrey B. Spence Award for Interfaith Understanding**, presented to individuals or organizations for particular distinction in working across religious lines. A Lutheran pastor, Rev. Roberts accepted a call to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Lynchburg in January 1991. During his time at Holy Trinity, Dennis has built on the foundation of interfaith work already established in the congregation. The parish education program has grown to include a number of classes, study groups, programs, and trips exploring interfaith issues. In the Lynchburg community, Roberts serves on the Lynchburg Chapter of Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, and he has been a member of the United Way of Central Virginia Campaign Cabinet for a number of years. He has also served as a board member and president of Interfaith Outreach Association and as president of The SpheX Club of Lynchburg.

The Humanitarian Awards are presented annually in communities across the state by the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities. Begun in 1967 in Lynchburg, when the organization was part of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the Humanitarian Awards honor individuals and organizations who have demonstrated a commitment to the promotion of respect and understanding among people of diverse racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

In celebration of the 50th Annual Humanitarian Awards Dinner, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities is working with Lynchburg College to update the Fellowship Circle at the center of campus to include the VCIC name. The Fellowship Circle honors the founding of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities on Lynchburg College's campus back in 1935.

For 82 years, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities has been addressing prejudices in all forms in order to improve academic achievement, increase workplace productivity, and enhance local trust. Through workshops, retreats, and customized programs, VCIC works with schools, businesses, and communities to achieve success through inclusion.

The 2017 VCIC Humanitarian Awards Dinner is chaired by Dr. Kenneth R. Garren, President, Lynchburg College.

For more information about the organization or the Awards Dinner, visit www.inclusiveVA.org.

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