



NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: JONATHAN ZUR, 804-515-7950
JZUR@INCLUSIVEVA.ORG

VCIC Announces Recipients of 51st Annual Peninsula Humanitarian Awards

*2019 Peninsula Humanitarian Awards Dinner Presented by the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities
February 21, 2019 – Newport News Marriott at City Center.*

(Newport News, VA) - The Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 51st annual Peninsula Humanitarian Awards. The awards honor individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to the promotion of respect and understanding among people of diverse racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds in the Peninsula community. The 2019 awards will be presented by the Peninsula Chapter of VCIC at their annual dinner on Thursday, February 21, 2019 at the Newport News Marriott at City Center.

The 2019 Peninsula Humanitarian Awards Recipients

Joshua M. David – Josh David is in his 22nd year of practicing law at David, Kamp & Frank, L. L. C., primarily as a business lawyer. A third generation honoree, Josh follows the example of community involvement set by his grandfather, Frank Blechman, and his parents, Libby and Buddy David. He has been active with the Hampton Roads Chapter of the American Red Cross, Hampton Ecumenical Lodgings & Provisions (HELP), The Franklin O. and Marie P. Blechman Memorial Trust, Young Lawyers Conference of the Virginia State Bar, Virginia-Israel Advisory Board, and the United Jewish Community of the Virginia Peninsula. He is deeply involved with Rodef Sholom Temple, serving on the Board, as President, then Relocation Chair, during which time the synagogue relocated to the United Jewish Community of the Virginia Peninsula.

Katherine S. Edwards – Kathy Edwards, recently retired president and CEO of An Achievable Dream (AAD), began her career in public relations. In 2000, she signed on to direct development and communications for An Achievable Dream, a non-profit that has won plaudits for its rigorous attention to academic, social, and moral education. She was named President and CEO of An Achievable Dream in December 2013, and led AAD's first expansion to Virginia Beach and to Henrico County. In addition to her work at AAD, Kathy has been active in the community on various boards and community events, currently serving on the Newport News Education Foundation. In the past, she has served on the boards of Preschool Partners, York County Education Foundation, People to People, and Peninsula Metropolitan YMCA.

Andrew T. "Tom" Olaisen – Tom Olaisen joined the Boys Club of Newport News in 1946 at the age of eleven, just two months after the club first opened. His membership at the club ended when he turned sixteen but he returned to assist in craft programs and special events. In January 1954, Tom was offered a full-time position at the Club and he readily accepted the job of Educational Director. In 1961, he was promoted to Program Director, and four years later in 1965, he was appointed the Executive Director. Under Tom's leadership, the Club integrated in 1965 and began serving girls in 1991, changing the name to Boys & Girls Club of the Virginia Peninsula. Tom was recognized by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia for 52 years of outstanding service with the Boys & Girls Club of the Virginia Peninsula.

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Jeffery O. Smith – Dr. Jeffery O. Smith began his tenure as superintendent of Hampton City Schools in 2015. He strongly believes that the school division has a greater impact when there are strong community partnerships. To this end, Dr. Smith is a member of the following boards: Sentara Healthcare, Smart Beginnings of the Virginia Peninsula, Virginia Air and Space Center, VersAbility Resources, a member of the Region V GO Virginia Council, and president of the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS). He also serves as the superintendent-in-charge for New Horizons Regional Education Centers and is a 2017-2018 graduate of the Civic Leadership Institute. Dr. Smith has pastored for more than 34 years, serving as pastor of the Macedonia Baptist Church, Union Prospect Baptist Church, and Garland Avenue Baptist Church.

Alexis N. Swann – Alexis Swann is the Peninsula Market President and Hampton Roads Business Banking Manager of Wells Fargo. She brings over 20 years of experience in the financial services industry. Active in the community, Alexis serves as a board member of the Christopher Newport University School of Business Advisory Board, the Jamestown Yorktown Foundation, Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, and the Newport News Police Foundation. Past leadership roles include the Peninsula Habitat for Humanity, Black Chamber of Commerce, and the Urban League Guild. Alexis is also a member of Delta Sigma Theta. A strong advocate for financial literacy, Alexis volunteers her time doing presentations in fairs, schools, and expos within the market.

One Hundred Black Men of America, Inc., Virginia Peninsula Chapter – The concept of the 100 began in New York in 1963 when a group of concerned African American men began to meet to explore ways of improving conditions in their community. They envisioned an organization that would implement programs designed to improve the quality of life for African Americans and other minorities. The Virginia Peninsula Chapter, founded in 1991, provides a positive mentoring presence in the Hampton Roads communities. They work in partnership with youth, families, community leaders, and institutions to help African American youth and their families maximize their potential by providing mentoring, parenting education, and programs that focus on health & wellness, economic empowerment, education, and leadership development.

The Daily Press will also recognize the 2018 Citizen of the Year at the Humanitarian Awards Dinner.

Fifty-one years ago, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities - then called the National Conference of Christians and Jews - began a tradition on the Virginia Peninsula, "to honor the work of our friends, neighbors, and family members who gave to others the same rights, respect and dignity that they sought for themselves." Today, VCIC works with schools, businesses, and communities to achieve success through inclusion. The 84-year-old organization delivers programs to educators and students in the region through Diversity Dialogue Day, Project Inclusion, and the Building Inclusive Schools professional development program. VCIC also provides professional development for many local businesses and nonprofit organizations, leveraging diversity and inclusion to achieve success. The organization recently opened an office in Hampton Roads to better serve the community.

The 2019 VCIC Humanitarian Awards Dinner is co-chaired by Bill Downey (President & CEO, Riverside Health System) and Charlie Hill (President & Co-Founder, Hampton Roads Prostate Health Forum; Co-Founder, Community Free Clinic of Newport News). Daily Press and Metro Productions are the Humanitarian sponsors, and the Benefactor sponsor is Wells Fargo.

For more information about the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities or about reservations for the Awards Dinner on February 21, go to www.inclusiveVA.org.

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