

Awardees Announced for NCCF's Freedom to Express: The HeART of Community

On Saturday, September 7, 2024, at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, NCCF will celebrate four exemplary honorees.

BETHESDA, MD, UNITED STATES, June 11, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Saturday, September 7, 2024, at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, The [National Center for Children and Families](#) (NCCF) will celebrate four exemplary honorees that champion the universal importance of artistic expression in the health and healing of the most vulnerable among us. Co-Hosted by Doug Kammerer (Chief Meteorologist, NBC4) and Brianna Stoute (Merrily We Roll Along – Broadway) and emceed by Washington Media's power couple Allison Seymour (Get Up DC - WUSA9) and Marc Clarke (Fox 45 – Baltimore), NCCF's [Freedom to Express: The HeART of Community](#) will celebrate the healing power of the arts.



The distinguished honorees include:

Tom Cookerly Exceptional School Superintendent Leadership Award: Dr. Michelle Reid (Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)

Dr. Reid was chosen for her outstanding contributions in the areas of equity and achievement gap closure within Fairfax County Public Schools. She easily embodies the vision of the late Tom Cookerly, General Manager of WJLA, who desired to help young people who, through no fault of their own, struggled to reach their full potential due to extreme poverty, poor nutrition, inadequate dental care, and a lack of essentials such as coats, shoes, school supplies, and glasses. Dr. Reid's background in STEM and her advocacy for strong literacy skills demonstrate a balanced and inclusive approach to academic excellence. Her consistent and direct address of all issues surrounding poverty and equity further highlights her commitment to upholding the integrity and safety of the educational environment for all students in the County.

Champion in Our Midst: Petula Dvorak (The Washington Post)

Through her columns in The Washington Post, which brilliantly and empathetically illustrate the challenges and triumphs of the homeless in our community, Ms. Dvorak has illuminated critical issues and sparked essential conversations and action. Her ability to highlight the humanity of those who are so often rejected and ignored aligns perfectly with our gala theme this year, "Freedom to Express." Through her words, she exercises the freedom of expression to effect real change and enable others to be recognized, embodying the spirit of this award.

Humanitarian Spirit Award for Volunteerism: Marriott International

Marriott International has cultivated a unique culture of volunteerism that stands unparalleled, demonstrated by a diverse array of initiatives throughout the corporation. This commitment has resonated deeply across communities, bringing tangible benefits, and spreading joy among those most in need. Highlights include Marriott's Women in Tech Group creating STEM kits for over 300 students at JC Nalle Elementary during Black History Month which illustrate a commitment to educational support and racial equality. Marriott Headquarters held a Back-to-School Drive in 2023, mobilizing resources to successfully provide over 1000 backpacks filled with school supplies to homeless and poor youth. In November 2023 they built 100 custom skateboards, donating 100 helmets to ensure youth safety. During the Holiday Season, employees held a Toy Drive which included twelve 4-foot custom dollhouses that brought immense happiness over 100 children at Santa's Workshop. The Little Library project facilitated by another passionate group led to the installation of 10 little libraries at NCCF campuses, promoting literacy and the joy of reading among community members. Finally, a dedicated group started a knitting and crocheting club, producing over 30 warm hats for NCCF's youngest beneficiaries, showcasing the warmth and care of the Marriott family. We salute Marriott International for supporting their employees in their creative and distinctive philanthropic energies to enrich the lives of over 2,000 poor children in need.

John F. White Alumni Award: Mr. Rodell Jones

As a former participant in the Future Bound Independent Living Program, Mr. Jones' rise from a high school student in an out of home placement to a respected professional in national security is truly inspiring. His academic pursuits, culminating in a Bachelor of Applied Science in Criminal Justice from the University of Northern Iowa and ongoing Master's studies in National Security Intelligence Analysis at the University of New Hampshire, exemplify his devotion to continuous improvement and excellence. Mr. Jones' current role as the Intelligence Operations Specialist with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) exemplifies extraordinary dedication to serving and protecting our community. In his spare time, Mr. Jones is heavily involved with the Montgomery County Alumni Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc., and his commitment to mentoring young men, further illustrates his dedication to giving back and supporting the next generation.

Freedom to Express: The HeART of Community is an in-person, community event. Sponsorships are available to the public at www.heartofcommunity.org. All sponsorship levels, beginning at

\$75, include admission to the Freedom to Express: The HeART of Community 2024 event.

About The National Center for Children and Families:

The National Center for Children and Families (NCCF) empowers communities in the National Capital Region to take care of the less fortunate in their midst, transforming and improving their quality of life. Our programs provide comprehensive and tailored services that, while demonstrating cultural humility, help children, youth and families become confident and self-sufficient, leaving trauma and poverty behind. Learn more at www.nccf-cares.org.

Rachel Spassiani

The National Center for Children and Families (NCCF)

+1 202-713-6108

rspassiani@nccf-cares.org

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