

URBAN LEAGUE OF ESSEX COUNTY CELEBRATES COMMUNITY SERVICE OF 5 HONOREES AT ANNUAL R.E.D. GALA OCTOBER 16

*This Year's Theme: Our Children's Literacy
Crisis - The Urgency of Now*

NEWARK, NJ, UNITED STATES, October 10, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, we do not always see or recognize people or organizations that are working steadfastly behind the scenes to improve the community. These heroes make it their mission or devote their time to stimulate social justice and economic empowerment to traditionally underserved populations.

The Urban League of Essex County, a major nonprofit organization, invites the public to celebrate five distinguished honorees whose contributions have mirrored the organization's mission to help African Americans and disadvantaged residents achieve economic and social advancement.

The occasion is the Urban League's annual [R.E.D. \(Racial Equity Diversity\) Gala](#) to be held at Nanina's In the Park, in Belleville, NJ on Wednesday, October 16, 2024 at 6:00 PM. This year's theme is "Our Children's Literacy Crisis - The Urgency of Now."



The Foundation for Literacy Starts Early

The honorees include Mosaic – NJ Advance Media, PNC – Grow Up Great, Dr. Charles Payne of Rutgers University, Source of Knowledge Bookstore in Newark, and former NJ Supreme Court Justice Hon. Gary S. Stein. The event is also an opportunity to recognize two major sponsors, Wells Fargo and PSE&G. Urban League President & CEO Vivian Cox Fraser, said, “We are pleased to have such outstanding honorees and sponsors as we bring them and the community together to celebrate them and to raise funds to continue our vital work.”

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The dinner and awards ceremony is the Urban League’s most important fundraiser of the year to support its array of programs and services including individual counseling, groups seminars, social service assistance, and community outreach that results in home ownership, housing assistance, new entrepreneurship, upskilling and employment, and financial literacy.

A recent study showed that more than 80 percent of third graders in Newark district schools cannot read on grade level. A major Urban League initiative for 2024-2025 is to increase its portfolio of services through technology to improve the literacy and reading proficiency of the youth of Newark and the surrounding Essex County.

PSEG is an ongoing sponsor and the President of PSEG Foundation and Director, Corporate Social Responsibility, Calvin Ledford Jr., remarked “PSEG's vision is powering a future where people use less energy, and it's cleaner, safer and delivered more reliably than ever. Our public service efforts help empower our customers, our communities, our workforce and other stakeholders. As a long-time partner of the Urban League of Essex County (ULEC), we’re proud to support ULEC's efforts to combat the literacy crisis and aid in helping underserved residents achieve social and economic advancement.”

Wells Fargo is a prior honoree and an ongoing sponsor. “Wells Fargo is proud of its longstanding support of The Urban League of Essex County,” said Tomas Porturas, Senior Community Impact & Sustainability Specialist. “Through their commitment to literacy and community service, ULEC is making a meaningful difference in the lives of children in underserved communities. Wells Fargo is proud to join ULEC’s efforts to ensure that every child across Essex County has access to a quality education and reading resources.”

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The Urban League has a tradition of bestowing honors in the name of the National Urban League’s first executive director, Whitney M. Young, Jr., and in the name of the founder of the Essex County affiliate, William M. Ashby. Each year, it has these awards and additional awards for people and organizations deserving special recognition:

Community Impact Award Honoree: MOSAIC - NJ ADVANCE MEDIA

Mosaic is an innovative news platform that celebrates the mosaic represented by the richness of New Jersey’s diverse cultures.

Corporate Citizen Award Honoree: PNC GROW UP GREAT - PNC BANK

For 20 years, PNC Grow Up Great® has helped children from birth to age 5 discover their love of learning through volunteerism by its employees.

Whitney M. Young, Jr. Award Honoree: DR. CHARLES M. PAYNE

Dr. Payne, a Professor at Rutgers University-Newark, directs the Joseph Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Research with a focus on urban education and social inequality.

William M. Ashby Award Honoree: SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE BOOKSTORE

Serving the Newark community since 1992, Source of Knowledge is not only a bookstore, but a community center that specializes in Black art, Black literature and culture as well.

Diversity Champion Award Honoree: HON. GARY S. STEIN

The Honorable Gary S. Stein served on the New Jersey State Supreme Court for more than 17 years and subsequently filed a major public interest lawsuit challenging New Jersey's extreme racial and socioeconomic segregation of its public schools as unconstitutional.

For more information on tickets, sponsorships, and donations, contact Ms. Patricia Sermon, Chief Operating Officer, Urban League of Essex County, Newark, NJ, patsermon@ulec.org, www.ulec.org, 973-624-9535 x294.

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