

Urban League of Essex County Hosts Annual Gala Celebrating 'Breaking Barriers, Building Futures'

Distinguished Honorees are Robert Clark, Father Ed Leahy, United Airlines and NJ Local Initiatives Support Corporation

NEWARK, NJ, UNITED STATES, October 15, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Urban League of Essex County](#) will host its Annual Gala on Monday, October 21, 2025, at Nanina's in the Park in Belleville, New Jersey. This

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The leaders we honor truly embody our mission of breaking barriers and building futures,. Their work uplifts our communities and inspires continued progress toward equity and opportunity for all.”

Vivian Cox Fraser, President & CEO, Urban League of Essex County

year's theme, “Breaking Barriers, Building Futures,” celebrates individuals and organizations that exemplify the Urban League's enduring mission to empower communities and change lives through education, employment, housing, and advocacy.

For more than a century, the Urban League of Essex County has been a steadfast advocate for equity and opportunity—helping individuals and families achieve economic self-reliance and access to resources that improve quality of life. Through programs in workforce development, digital literacy, financial empowerment,

youth development, and affordable housing, ULEC continues to serve as a catalyst for social and economic transformation in Newark and across Essex County.

“The Urban League of Essex County's work is about creating pathways to prosperity,” said Vivian Cox Fraser, President and CEO. “Our annual gala not only celebrates our impact, but it also brings together the partners and supporters who make this mission possible. Together, we're breaking barriers and building stronger, more equitable futures for the communities we serve.”

This year's celebration will honor community and corporate leaders who exemplify the Urban League's values of service, empowerment, and leadership. The evening will feature an elegant dinner, live entertainment, and a reflection on the organization's ongoing initiatives to close the racial wealth gap and expand access to education and economic opportunity. 2025 Honorees

William M. Ashby Award: Father Edwin Leahy

Headmaster, St. Benedict's Preparatory School

Honored for his lifelong dedication to educating and mentoring Newark's youth and building a community rooted in compassion and opportunity.

Whitney M. Young Jr. Award: Robert Clark

Founder & CEO, Newark Opportunity Youth Network

Recognized for his leadership and advocacy for disconnected youth, helping to create pathways to education and employment across Newark.

Corporate Citizens Award: United Airlines

Celebrated for its commitment to workforce development, diversity, and community investment, strengthening communities through education and shared progress.

Community Impact Award: LISC New Jersey

Honored for its transformative work in affordable housing, small business development, and community revitalization throughout Essex County.

The Urban League of Essex County extends heartfelt gratitude to its 2025 Gala Sponsors, whose generosity and partnership make this event—and the League's vital work—possible.

Thank You to Our 2025 Gala Sponsors

Your commitment helps us empower communities and change lives.

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- LISC New Jersey
- New Jersey Children's Foundation
- Newark Beth Israel Medical Center
- Panasonic
- Papa Johns
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The Urban League of Essex County Gala is a signature celebration of community, leadership, and progress. Proceeds support ULEC's life-changing programs that advance economic empowerment and opportunity for individuals and families throughout Essex County.

Vivian Fraser

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