

For immediate release
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Unity Awards presented at American Theatre

June 16, 2014 – A Hampton University student who wants to be a lawyer, the president of Thomas Nelson Community College, the Hampton History Museum and Hampton's Citizens Fire Academy were among the individuals, organizations or offices that received Unity Awards last week from the Citizens' Unity Commission.

The awards were established in 1997 to recognize the contributions of individuals, organizations and initiatives that support diversity. Last year's winners included local religious leaders, a national board-certified teacher, and a neighborhood association.

Winners announced Thursday during a ceremony at The American Theatre:

John T. Dever, president of Thomas Nelson Community College

Dever won for his commitment to healthy racial and cultural relations, including his support of the College's Institute of Diversity and Inclusion. The Institute is fashioned after Hampton's Diversity College. According to the nomination form, Dever has continuously shared his personal and professional views on why diversity awareness is "crucial to effective leadership and service at a community college." He encouraged faculty and staff to "aspire to become ambassadors for diversity and inclusion on the campus." And, "he has put resources and professional influence behind the importance of educating people and assuring that they have the tools to be effective in communicating and problem solving across the wide spectrum of human diversity."

Edward Robinson, Hampton University student

Robinson is an Army veteran and intern with the City of Hampton who has worked to advance an awareness of diversity issues and concerns, participated in fostering dialogue amongst diverse cultural groups, and demonstrated a commitment to cultural diversity. He is a member of the Hampton Military Affairs Committee, volunteered at the Moton Early Childhood center, volunteered with the Hampton University Museum, and is a member of the Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. According to the nomination form, "his energy and motivation towards causes are contagious."

Desiree Wapples, Lincoln Park Resident Council

The nomination form says that "as a long time resident of Lincoln Park public housing, "Desi" continues to work toward building a sense of community with her neighbors. She helps to create this environment for some people and to sustain it for others." Wapples volunteers with various city of Hampton programs and organizations, including the Share program and various family festivals and back to school celebrations.

Novelle Dickenson, volunteer

Dickenson works with various organizations that promote and foster healthy and cultural relations, such as the Town & Gown Committee, the NAACP and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. According to the nomination "He believes in the values of living in a diverse community. He respects the opinions of all. He is fair in all of his dealings. Novelle will be an active member of this community."

The Hampton History Museum

The nomination form cited the museum's "Front Porch Music" series, oral history presentations and Lunch in Time programs as examples of a commitment to fostering healthy racial and cultural relations. Among other things, the nomination form said the museum has "advanced an awareness of diversity issues and concerns in our community, participated in fostering positive dialogue amongst diversity cultural groups," and "demonstrated a commitment to cultural diversity through community involvement."

Hampton Fire& Rescue Division

The division's Citizens Fire Academy is cited for "advancing an awareness of diversity issues and concerns in our community by fostering positive dialogue amongst diverse cultural groups" and "demonstrating a commitment to cultural diversity through community involvement." The nomination form said Lt. (Charles) Kempton "provided outstanding customer service to all who decided to join and he, in particular, treated all with respect."

The Citizens' Unity Commission promotes and sponsors activities and events that bring diverse citizens together across the many dimensions of Diversity. The office offers as series of diversity and inclusion educational options designed for individuals interested in more effective relationships in the community and workplace. For more information about the Commission or the awards, go to www.hampton.gov/unity or email unity@hampton.gov

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