

Village Maker Awards Gala Celebrates Those Working to Build Community

It takes a village to raise a child, support a family and improve our streets. Central Community House once again held the Village Maker Awards presented by PNC on April 3 to celebrate the everyday heroes who work to make a strong, vibrant community. The event serves as an important fundraiser to help sustain our vital services and keep our doors open. Keynote speaker Frances Frazier, Senior Associate of Everyday Democracy and lead researcher of the Rise Sister Rise project, was honored as the “Community Hero Village Maker” for her lifetime of work studying, teaching and empowering others on topics of diversity and cultural competency.

The uplifting stories of six other winners (listed below) were shared with over 125 guests who enjoyed the warmhearted company, outstanding food and a fun silent auction at The Blue-stone. Graduate students from the Ohio State University School of Music entertained the crowd on the cello and viola.

Special thanks to Sam Taylor for allowing the use of his “Peace” artwork for the Village Maker awards. Also thanks to Kimberly Cole, Ingenious Image Media, who volunteered time and talents to photograph the event.

The Winners of 2014 Village Maker Awards:

- Community Hero – Frances Frazier, Everyday Democracy, Rise Sister Rise and Women’s Workcf, Inc. for decades of work teaching, training and empowering others, especially African-American women and girls.
- Community Partner – The Ohio State University Service Learning Initiative and Professor Susan Melsop, bringing university students and local teens together to better their world through the Design Matters course
- Jens & Sherry Hemmingsen and Richard & Joyce Harris – growing community through work in Community Gardens
- Java Kitrick, Puffin Foundation West, for tireless advocacy and work to connect people and bring about peaceful change especially through arts and culture
- Cecil Ahad, Morally Excellent janitorial services and Men for the Movement, is a mentor and volunteer for peace efforts and initiatives to help men re-entering society after incarceration.
- Pastor Bob Ward, First English Lutheran Church, for being an open, positive force for residents along Main Street, helping residents find employment, and leading an array of public peace initiatives

This group joins previous Village Makers: State Senator Charleta Tavares, Greater Columbus Arts Council, Kent Peters owner of Black Creek Bistro, community gardener Daniel Ingwersen, and Calvin Hairston, neighborhood advocate.



Keynote speaker and winner of the Community Hero Village Maker Award was Frances Frazier (center) for her decades of work teaching, training and empowering others, especially African-American women and girls. Pictured here with Pam McCarthy, CCH executive director and representative from presenting sponsor PNC Theresa Saelim, VP Community Development.



Java Kitrick of Puffin Foundation West was named a Village Maker for her advocacy for social justice and contributions to connecting CCH and other city youth with outstanding opportunities. Puffin West Foundation works to connect people and bring about peaceful change especially through arts and culture.



Richard & Joyce Harris were honored for their leadership of the Growing Hearts and Hands Community Garden efforts which provides families garden space on vacant lots as well as grows fresh produce for local food pantries.



The Hemmingsen Family were also honored for their work in Community Gardening. They have greatly improved and maintained gardens at Central Community House bringing quaint, peaceful places for visitors to enjoy.



Special Thanks to Jennifer Walton, pictured with her husband Shawn, for serving as the event committee chair and for acting as emcee. Jennifer is an associate of Nationwide Insurance who also served as a sponsor for the event. Additional support was provided by CareSource, Molina, Buckeye Community Health Plan, Nationwide Children's Hospital and OSU Wexner Medical Center.



Cecil Ahad, operator of Morally Excellent janitorial services, was named a Village Maker for his work helping African-American males, especially those who have re-entered society after incarceration. Cecil is a tireless mentor and volunteer working on projects such as Men for the Movement, African-American Male Wellness Walk, Restorative Justice Circles, CeaseFire Columbus, and National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice.



Susan Melsop, professor in the OSU Department of Design and The Ohio State University Service Learning Initiative led by Ola Ahlqvist were honored with the Community Partner Village Maker Award for their work in bringing university students and local teens together for Design Matters, a collaborative discovery and design course where students work together to design items to impact their world.



Pastor Bob Ward was named a Village Maker for his leadership of First English Lutheran Church which opens its doors to the community by providing programs for children and adults and for helping neighborhood residents secure stable employment. The church is a constant partner of the CCH Community Organizing program and together their efforts have resulted in a safer, cleaner neighborhood.