



Unity Achievement Award Presentation

Thursday, June 9, 2022

Twenty individuals and six organizations recently received the Union County Human Relations Commission's prestigious Unity Award for Achievement, an honor given to role models who dedicate their time and efforts to activities and programs that raise and honor the human spirit.

The 2020 awards -- slated to be presented on Monday, May 4th, 2020 but sidelined due to the COVID pandemic shutdown two months earlier -- were handed out during a special presentation held at the Kean University's STEM Building in Union Township on Thursday, June 9th, 2022.

The 2020 awards marked the 19th year in which the Commission has named honorees.

The Union County Human Relations Commission
proudly presents our
2020 Unity Achievement Award recipients



<i>Front row from left.....</i>	
H. Edward Davenport, Cranford's TV-35	MEDIA
Juanita Nelson (Mother of posthumous honoree Westfield High School Principal Dr. Derrick Nelson)	EDUCATOR
<i>Second row.....</i>	
Emmy Asinelli accepting award for Dr. Michael Skolnick DMD	BUSINESS
Morgan K. Nelson (Daughter of posthumous honoree Dr. Nelson)	(Educator)
<i>Third Row.....</i>	
Patricia Bixel, Director, StarFish Food Pantry of Plainfield	FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION
Theresa Cowing, Board Secretary, accepting the award on behalf of Moms Helping Moms Foundation	COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION
Sheronda Jackson (Dr. Derrick Nelson's fiancée) accepting the posthumous award on behalf of Westfield High School Principal Dr. Derrick Nelson	EDUCATOR
<i>Fourth Row.....</i>	
Miguel Edgehill, Covenant United Methodist Church of Plainfield	FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION
Allison Sanchez, Educational Services Commission of New Jersey's Adult Community Services	PUBLIC SERVICE
Jennifer Popper, Editor, TAPinto Plainfield	MEDIA (2019 recipient)
<i>Top Row.....</i>	
Heroes4Heroes Superhero / Retired Union County Department of Corrections Officer Peter Femia	LAW ENFORCEMENT
Retired Springfield Police Lieutenant Michael McNany and Retired Springfield Police Sgt. Edward McNany, McNany Charitable Foundation Inc.	COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION
<i>Not pictured.....</i>	
WWII Navy Veteran Daniel Sullivan (presented posthumously)	VETERAN
Sally and Mike Cursi, Shining Stars Network	NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
Joyce Benz, Program Director, Union County Intensive Family Support Services, Mental Health Association in New Jersey	INDIVIDUAL
Mallory Banks, Scotch Plains-Fanwood	STUDENT
Rabbi Avi Friedman, Congregation Ohr Shalom/ Summit Jewish Community Center	CLERGY
Westfield Public Schools Supervisor of Guidance Maureen Mazzaresse	SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT
Tiffany Kenny, former Westfield Police Officer	SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT
SCP Youth Soccer Inc. founders Rodrigo DaSilva and Steven Valeira	SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT
Dr. Derrick Nelson's father, Willie Nelson	(Educator)







Co-Chair Dr. Martin Dickerson welcomed everyone and made opening remarks. He then introduced Union County First Assistant Prosecutor James O. Tansey, who oversees the UCHRC.



Unity Achievement Award by Veteran

was presented posthumously to

Daniel Sullivan, WWII Veteran, United States Navy

who saw action during the decisive D-Day invasion at Normandy,
as well as the battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa in the Pacific theater

in recognition of his incredible service to our country,

above and beyond the call of duty

and of a well-lived life full of love, integrity, faith and respect.

Sadly, Mr. Sullivan passed away on April 4, 2020.

The presentation was followed by a Moment of Silence.



The award was presented by
UV Navy veteran and UCHRC Commissioner Peter McTiernan
who wore his United States Navy cap in Mr. Sullivan's honor.



Achievement by a Student

Mallory Banks
Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School

*Recognition for
shining a light on,
and engaging the community in,
spreading autism awareness*

Presented by
UCHRC Youth Commissioner
Chelsea K. Young,
Plainfield High School

Achievement by a Corporate/ Business Enterprise

Dr. Michael Skolnick, DMD

*Recognition for
adding a
different kind of sweetness
to the lives of our children,
and our world*

Award accepted by
**Emmy Asinelli, Vice-President of
Marketing**

Presented by
UCHRC Commissioner
Esmeralda Vargas





Achievement by a Community Organization

Moms Helping Moms Foundation

**Award accepted by
Theresa Cowing, Board Secretary**

*Recognition for
identifying a serious problem
and finding a way to collectively alleviate it*

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Lorraine Akonis



Achievement by a Community Organization

McNary Charitable Foundation, Inc.

Award accepted by Edward J. McNary and Michael O. McNary

Recognition for creating positive change in memory of a loved one

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Karen E. Positan

Achievement by a Nonprofit Organization

Shining Stars Network

*Recognition for shining a light on the special needs community,
while bringing everyone together in a place they can call home*

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Laura Morana



Achievement by an Individual

Joyce H. Benz, Program Director
Union County Intensive Family Support Services
Mental Health Association in New Jersey

*Recognition for her steadfast tenacity to work miracles
so that those grappling with mental health issues
can envision a brighter tomorrow*

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Beth Giannobile





Achievement in Law Enforcement

Peter Femia
Union County Department of Corrections Officer (ret.)
and
Heroes4Heroes

*Recognition for superhuman efforts on behalf of
special-needs and terminally ill children*

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Beth Giannobile



Achievement in Public Service

**Allison Sanchez
Educational Services Commission
of New Jersey's Adult Community Services**

*Recognition for being a visionary advocate
for special-needs populations
offering them a lifeline to create future possibilities*

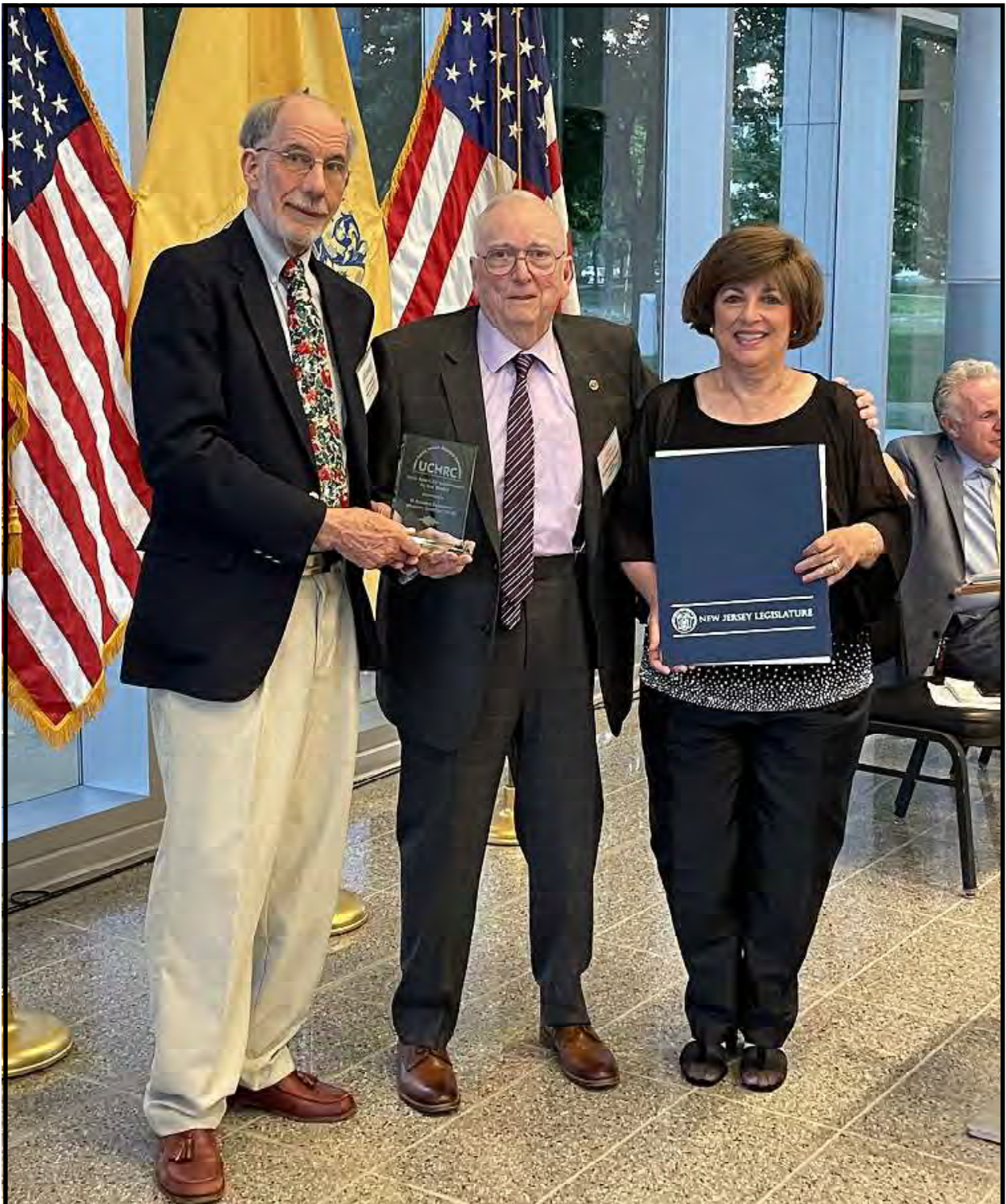
Presented by UCHRC Co-Chair Dr. Martin Dickerson

Achievement by the Media

H. Edward Davenport
Director, Cranford TV-35

*Recognition for professionally, providing a steady stream of information
and, personally, for being an inspiration to us all*

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Peter McTiernan



Unity Achievement Award by an Educator

was presented posthumously to

Dr. Derrick Nelson
Principal, Westfield High School

Award accepted by his fiancée **Sheronda Braker**
and daughter **Morgan Nelson**

Also pictured here with Dr. Nelson's parents, **Willie** and **Juanita Nelson**

Recognition for his selfless sacrifice in compassionate service to others

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Dr. Martin Dickerson





**Achievement
by the Clergy**

**Rabbi Avi
Friedman
Congregation
Ohr Shalom/
Summit Jewish
Community
Center**

*Recognition for
paraphrasing
the great sage
Hillel,
the Elder,
always
being himself,
and for others*

**Presented by
UCHRC
Commissioner
Linda Weissbrod**

Achievement by a Faith-Based Organization

StarFish Food Pantry of Plainfield and Covenant United Methodist Church/Plainfield

*Recognition for creating and growing
an interfaith union of neighbors helping neighbors*

Award accepted by
Patricia Bixel, Director, StarFish Food Pantry
Miguel Edgehill, Covenant United Methodist Church

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Faheemah El-Amin





Special Achievement

Maureen Mazzaresse
Supervisor of Guidance, Westfield Public Schools

Award accepted by
Dr. Robert Gonzales, Westfield Superintendent of Schools

*Recognition for her dedication, determination, creativity,
and heartfelt interventions on behalf of all she serves*

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Esmeralda Vargas

Special Achievement

Tiffany Kenny
former Westfield Police Officer

*Recognition for her dedicated and heartfelt commitment and action
that makes a difference, locally and globally*

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Karen E. Positan





Special Achievement

Rodrigo DaSilva and Steven Valeira
SCP Youth Soccer, Inc.

*Recognition for expanding the reach of dedicated coaching in sports and life
to enrich the experiences of the youth whose lives they touch*

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Linda Weissbrod

Achievement by the Media 2019

Jennifer M. Popper
Editor, TAPinto Plainfield

*Recognition for her dedicated commitment to shine the spotlight
on her community as an editor, and as a volunteer*

Presented by UCHRC Commissioner Clifford Simon



Special Recognition

Jo Ann Hamilton, UCHRC Co-Chair, 2018-2020

Recognition for her dedicated leadership and service during her two-year term as UCHRC Co-Chair

Presented by UCHRC Co-Chair Dr. Martin Dickerson



Special Recognition

Ruth E. Positan

Recognition for her ongoing behind-the-scenes assistance and support for the past twenty-five years since her daughter became a Commissioner when Ruth was a then a young woman of 72!

by UCHRC Co-Chair Dr. Martin Dickerson



20 Outstanding Citizens Honored by the Union County Human Relations Commission at Unity Award Presentation

Fourteen individuals and six organizations were nominated and selected for their dedicated efforts to foster human rights, human relations, and human dignity among the people of Union County.

The Union County Human Relations Commission's 2020 award recipients were presented with their long-awaited Unity Achievement Awards on Thursday, June 9th, at Kean University STEM Center in the Township of Union. The 19th annual presentation was slated for May 2020 but had to be postponed due to the Covid pandemic.

Award categories included achievements by a corporate/business enterprise, community organization, nonprofit organization, individual, member of law enforcement, public servant, student, educator, clergy, faith-based organization, military/veteran, and member of the media.

"The commission is proud to recognize our local role models who dedicate themselves to helping others and strengthening our communities," Commissioner Co-Chair Dr. Martin Dickerson said. "These regular people do extraordinary things to make others' lives better, and the evening's presentation highlights all of the good that is being accomplished in Union County."

The mission of the Union County Human Relations Commission is to actively encourage, develop, promote, and strengthen respect for human rights and cultural diversity among the people of Union County.

"The volunteers who dedicate their time and talents to serve on the Commission unequivocally agree that one of the best ways to strive to accomplish their mission is to publicly honor those who already do it well," said Union County First Assistant Prosecutor James O. Tansey, who ultimately oversees the Commission.

The recipients of the 2020 Unity Achievement Awards are **Dr. Michael Skolnik, DMD** (Business Enterprise); **Moms Helping Moms Foundation** (Community Organization); **McNany Charitable Foundation** (Community Organization); **Shining Stars Network** (Nonprofit Organization); **Joyce H. Benz, Program Director, Union County Intensive Family Support Services, Mental Health Association in New Jersey** (Individual); **Union County Department of Corrections Officer Peter Femia (ret)** and **Heroes4Heroes** (Law Enforcement); **Allison Sanchez, Educational Services Commission of New Jersey's Adult Community Services** (Public Service); **H. Edward Davenport, Director, Cranford TV-35** (Media); **Mallory Banks, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School** (Student); **Rabbi Avi Friedman, Congregation Ohr Shalom/Summit Jewish Community Center** (Clergy); **StarFish Food Pantry of Plainfield and Covenant United Methodist Church** (Faith-Based Organization); **Maureen Mazzarese, Supervisor of Guidance, Westfield Public Schools**; **Rodrigo DaSilva and Steven Valeira, SCP Youth Soccer Inc.**; and **former Police Officer Tiffany Kenny, Westfield Police Department** (Special Achievement).

Two awards were presented posthumously: **Daniel T. Sullivan**, United States Army Veteran (Military/Veteran), and **Dr. Derrick Nelson**, Westfield High School Principal (Educator).

World War II Veteran Daniel T. Sullivan, a Township of Union resident who passed away on April 4, 2020, was recognized for his incredible above-and-beyond the call of duty service to our country, and for a well-lived life full of love, integrity, faith, and respect. Known as “D-Day Dan by his family and friends, United States Navy veteran Daniel Sullivan saw action aboard the U.S.S. Texas, the flagship of the bombing force at Omaha Beach as part of the June 1944 D-Day invasion at Normandy. He also participated in the battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa in the Pacific Theater.

Dr. Derrick Nelson, principal of Westfield High School and a Plainfield resident, was recognized for his selfless sacrifice in compassionate service to others. He lapsed into a coma during a procedure to donate his bone marrow to an unknown 14-year-old boy in France, and died on April 8, 2019. His death came two months before Dr. Nelson and his fiancé, Sheronda Braker, the mother of their 5-year-old daughter Morgan, were scheduled to marry. He impacted the lives of people of all races and backgrounds in life, and now is seen as a hero to people around the world.

TAPinto Plainfield editor Jennifer M. Popper was also present to receive her 2019 Unity Award for Achievement by the Media.

The Commissioners also recognized **Mrs. Ruth E. Positan**, who, although not a formal member, has donated her time and assistance in support of the commission since her daughter, Commissioner and Recording Secretary Karen E. Positan, was appointed to the Commission in 1997.

The Commission was created by the Union County Prosecutor’s Office in 1991. The volunteer commissioners attend five regular meetings each year, and participate in the many public offerings that are scheduled throughout the year.

The Commission is actively seeking individuals who represent Union County’s 21 towns and our incredible diversity to serve as Commissioners. If you are interested in becoming a member, please email uchrc@ucnj.org.

Nominations are now open for the 2023 Unity Achievement Awards. In addition to our search for everyone who extends themselves in service to others, the upcoming awards are also seeking to honor individuals and organizations that extended themselves extraordinarily during the Covid pandemic.

For more information about the Commission, or to make a nomination, please visit its website at www.ucnj.org/uchrc.