

PRESS RELEASE

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ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HOST THEIR JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION



(from left to right) The Essex County Freeholder Board honored Clifford Smith, Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, and Rabbi Clifford M. Kulwin during its annual Jewish Heritage Month Celebration at the Hall of Records. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders held its Jewish Heritage Month Celebration on Wednesday, May 3, 2017, at the Hall of Records. During the event, the Freeholders honored **Rabbi Clifford M. Kulwin**, Rabbi of Temple B'nai Abraham in Livingston; **Phyllis Salowe-Kaye**, Executive Director of New Jersey Citizen Action; and **Clifford Smith**, Science Teacher at Union Avenue Middle School in Irvington.

Freeholder At-Large Patricia Sebold of Livingston began the program with opening remarks, stating, “I am filled with many emotions as we celebrate Jewish Heritage Month today. I am excited, proud, and honored to be a Jewish American and to be a catalyst for the celebration”. She went on to add, “Even though May is set aside as Jewish Heritage Month, we know that everyday Jewish Americans are hard at work making a difference in our communities, and tonight, the Freeholders have the pleasure of honoring several individuals who have done just that.”

Freeholder President Britnee N. Timberlake also presented remarks, recognizing the vast diversity that exists in Essex County. She shared highlights about the efforts of the Jewish community in aiding African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement and expressed how the two groups came together to embrace similar ideals, including peace, prosperity, and equality.



Freeholder Patricia Sebold (right), presents honoree Rabbi Clifford M. Kulwin (left), with the Board's Commendation. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

During the event, Freeholder Sebold honored the distinguished Rabbi of her synagogue, Rabbi Clifford M. Kulwin. Rabbi Kulwin graduated from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and was ordained by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religions after completing studies at its Cincinnati and Jerusalem campuses. Upon ordination, he served in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he was especially active in interfaith and social action efforts. After returning to the United States, he enrolled as a Doctoral Fellow, specializing in Jewish History at Columbia University where he published several scholarly and popular articles on the history of Jews in Spanish and Portuguese speaking lands. Under his leadership, Temple B'nai Abraham has grown in numbers and activity and was recently honored by the NAACP. Rabbi Kulwin and his wife, Robin, have been married since 1990, and together they live in Montclair. They are the proud parents of Noah and Molly.

Freeholder At-Large Lebbly C. Jones honored Clifford Smith for his unwavering dedication to the youth of Irvington. Clifford Smith earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications from Rutgers University and started his career as a sports writer for various newspapers in New Jersey before working in Detroit, Michigan, as an Associate Editor. With the hopes of becoming a better writer, he relocated to New Jersey and became a salesman in New York City. He worked for the Associated Press at night and made a living selling women's dresses for more than 25 years. After returning to Rutgers University and taking night classes, Clifford changed career paths and began teaching Science at Union Avenue Middle School in Irvington in 2009, a position he finds both challenging and rewarding. He credits his success to the passion he has for educating youth in Irvington and positively impacting their lives. Clifford and his wife Amy have been married for 32 years. They live in South Brunswick and are the proud parents of two boys, Ken and Jordan.



Freeholder Lebbly C. Jones (right), presents honoree Clifford Smith (left), with the Board's Commendation. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Freeholder President Timberlake presented honoree Phyllis Salowe-Kaye with the Board's Commendation for her leadership in the Jewish Community and in Essex County at-large. Phyllis graduated from Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1969 and began her career as a Newark Public School Teacher. After 10 years of teaching, she co-founded the Ronald B. Atlas Tenant Resource Center where she held the role of Director (1985 to 1987), and Assistant Director (1983 to 1985). She planned and implemented the first Housing Receivership Program in Essex County to deal with deteriorated apartment buildings. She also designed a "Tenant Leader Training School", a certified 8-week course in leadership development on housing and tenant issues. In 1987, Phyllis became the Executive Director of New Jersey Citizen Action (NJCA), a statewide coalition that addresses the vital issues of community reinvestment, affordable healthcare and housing, soaring insurance and utility rates, fair taxes, jobs, toxic hazards, human rights and concerns affecting today's working families. Phyllis has been married for 40 years and is the proud mother of 2 children and grandmother of 3 grandchildren.



Freeholder President Britnee N. Timberlake (right), presents the Board's Commendation to honoree Phyllis Salowe-Kaye (left). PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

During the program, Cantor Rebecca Moses of Temple Sharey Tefilo-Israel treated the audience to 3 beautiful musical selections, and Rabbi Daniel Cohen, who is also from Temple Sharey Tefilo-Israel, presented a prayer celebrating the joyous occasion.

For Additional Information:
Medinah E. Muhammad, Public Information
Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
465 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Newark, New Jersey, 07102
(973)-621-4452
mmuhammad@freeholders.essexcountynj.org