

PRESS RELEASE

February 28, 2019

ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS CELEBRATE AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH



Pictured are (from left to right, front row) Honorees - Dr. Wartyna Davis, Mr. Roger Monel, and Mrs. Antoinette Baskerville-Richardson. (From left to right, back row) Freeholder At-Large Romaine Graham, Freeholder Robert Mercado of District 1, Freeholder Carlos M. Pomares of District 5, Freeholder Vice President Wayne L. Richardson of District 2, and Freeholder At-Large Patricia Sebold. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders held its 2019 African-American Heritage Month Celebration on Wednesday, February 27, 2019, at the Hall of Records in Newark, New Jersey. The ceremony commemorated the heritage, culture, resilience, and spirit of the African-American community.

Vice President of the Board and District 2 Freeholder Wayne L. Richardson began the program with opening remarks and acknowledged African-American contributions, both past and present, in Essex County.

This year, the Board recognized three outstanding Essex County residents for their leadership: Irvington Associate School Business Administrator **Roger Monel**, Associate Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Science at William Paterson University **Dr. Wartyna L. Davis**, and Chief Education Officer for the City of Newark **Antoinette Baskerville-Richardson**.

Mr. Roger Monel is a Community Activist for more than fifty-five years, who lives and embraces the “Village Principle” when it comes to enhancing the lives of those who are disenfranchised. He has devoted his time, energy and passion planting seeds toward improving the quality of life for others through community involvement. He has established projects and initiatives such as: the “I

Make A Difference” Awards Scholarship Fund, to assist students with college tuition. He is the Co-founder of the Welfare-to-Work Initiative, under the General Assistance & Motivation through Employment and Training (GAMET) Program, he is also the Co-founder of the “SHARE” Food Program, and an Advocate of New Jersey Property Tax Reform.

In addition to those initiatives, he has been the coordinator of the “Be An Angel” Project for more than forty-two years. This project represents a partnership between cities throughout Essex County and the Salvation Army, which provides toys to needy children. He has been honored by numerous civic, religious, cultural and charitable groups throughout the State of New Jersey. His motto is “if I can touch somebody as I journey through life, then my living will not be in vain”.

Roger and his wife Carolyn reside in the City of Orange Township, where he has lived for over fifty-five years. They have one son Roger, Jr., a grandson Shawn Anthony, and a granddaughter Alyssa Camille.

Dr. Wartyna L. Davis is presently full professor of Political Science, Associate Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Science and Interim Chief Diversity Officer at William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey. She has written extensively, participated in numerous scholarly activities, and presented on several occasions at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. She is involved with several professional associations that include, but are not limited to: the Civil Rights Commission, the American Political Science Association, the Southern Political Science Association, the Academy of Political Science, the International Society of Political Psychology and the National Conference of Black Political Scientists.

To fulfill her desire to serve the community, she decided to parlay her vast experience as an educator into public service and was elected in 2013 to serve as Councilwoman at-Large for the Township of Bloomfield. She is the first African American Woman and first openly LGBT council member of the town. She is a member of the Essex County Democratic Committee and the Bloomfield Board of Education Stakeholders Strategic Planning Committee.

Dr. Davis is best known for her efforts in establishing a women’s empowerment conference during Women’s History Month and the Martin Luther King, Jr., day of service committee that, for the last 5 years, has provided community service initiatives including: mural painting, book drives and food drives for the less fortunate. This past year nearly 7 tons of food were collected on the day of service and 1,000 hygiene kits were shared with 12 local organizations.

The Honorable Wartyna L. Davis is a member of the Paterson Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. She is also a member of the First Congregational Church in Montclair and has resided in the Township of Bloomfield for 21 years. She is married to Kimberly Guillermo-Davis and they have 12-year old twins Tyler and Tyna.

Antoinette Baskerville-Richardson is a career educator who taught English, Theatre, and Creative Writing in the Newark Public Schools for over 30 years. She was an integral part of the struggle to return the Newark Public Schools to local control. She is currently the Chief Education Officer for the City of Newark, appointed by the Honorable Mayor Ras J. Baraka.

Mrs. Richardson served on the Newark Board of Education for two terms from 2011 to 2017, and served as Board president for three of those years. Her career in education included roles as the Legislative Representative and Vice-president of the Newark Teachers Union, and Coordinator at the Marion A. Bolden Student Center. While there, she developed a core of after school classes and university partnerships for Newark’s high school students. Currently, she is the Project Director for Stand & Deliver, a public speaking and leadership program which serves over 700 youth at 30 sites.

When reaching out to the members of the community concerned about education for the youth, she advises: “It is imperative, at this juncture, that Newark residents and all education advocates apply their knowledge and wisdom to reimagine, reshape, and reinvigorate our public schools. In addition to preparing students for higher education and the workforce, there is a shared ethical social responsibility to assist students in developing into responsible adults who actively contribute to the City of Newark and beyond.”

Antoinette is married to Wayne Richardson, District 2 Essex County Freeholder and Vice President of the Board. Together they have 5 children, who live throughout the United States, and 12 grandchildren. She is the daughter of Newark artist, Gladys Barker Grauer and is proud to have been "born and raised" in Newark, where she continues a legacy of civic responsibility and engagement in the improvement of educational opportunities and outcomes.

Reverend Maria Crompton, the Pastor of Elmwood United Presbyterian Church in East Orange, delivered prayers during the occasion and the audience was captivated by the musical talents of Tasha Williams Arroyo, from Belleville.

For Additional Information:

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