



ALABAMA SENIOR CITIZENS
HALL OF FAME

2023 AWARDS

SUNDAY, AUGUST 20, 2023 • 2:00 PM
RSA ACTIVITY CENTER
201 DEXTER AVENUE • MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA



GREETINGS FROM COMMISSIONER JEAN BROWN

Dear 2023 Honorees,

It is a privilege and an honor to recognize a group of seniors who have contributed so much to improving the lives of older Alabamians.

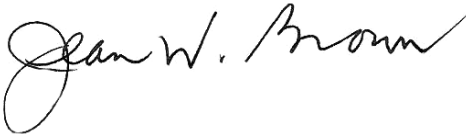
The many achievements of the Senior Citizens Hall of Fame Class of 2023 are truly remarkable. I offer my congratulations on their induction as permanent members to the Hall of Fame, and I salute them for their continued service to our state and their communities.

I also offer my congratulations to the Lifetime Achievement Commendation and Special Awards recipients. These awards honor their incredible ongoing commitment to serving our communities.

To the couples who have been married for 65 years or more, and to the individuals who are 100 years old or older who are being recognized this year, I extend my sincere congratulations on reaching these wonderful milestones.

For all that these honorees have achieved for their community and our state, we say, "Thank you."

Congratulations!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jean W. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Jean W. Brown
Commissioner
Alabama Department of Senior Services

TODAY'S PROGRAM



Welcoming Remarks

Jerry Fielding, Chairman
Senior Citizens Hall of Fame, Class of 2015

Invocation

Pledge of Allegiance
Debra Davis, Deputy Commissioner
Alabama Department of Senior Services

Special Guests

Jean Brown, Commissioner
Nick Nyberg, Programs and Planning Division Chief
Alabama Department of Senior Services

Installation of the Class of 2023

Presentation of Lifetime Achievement Awards

Presentation of Special Awards

Recognition of Senior Citizens

Married 65 Years or More
100 Years of Age or Older

Reception

ALABAMA SENIOR CITIZENS
HALL OF FAME



CLASS OF 2023

Annye H. Braxton
DEMOPOLIS

Frank Brown, Jr.
CULLMAN

Harold Crouch
CHATOM

Ruby Landis Denson
VESTAVIA HILLS

Fred D. Gray, Sr.
TUSKEGEE

Peggy Harris
CULLMAN

Charles L. Lett, Sr. MD
VALLEY GRANDE

Vanessa McKinney
CLANTON

Carolyn S. Middleton
MONTGOMERY

Nathan Williams, Jr.
MONTGOMERY

POSTHUMOUS
Joe Mack Ammons
ROANOKE

Roland Harper
GRAND BAY



Annye H. Braxton

Demopolis – Marengo County

Annye H. Braxton has been an outstanding citizen throughout her life, but particularly in her senior years. She has shown exceptional dedication and commitment to the elderly and her community. At the age of 62, Braxton founded the Braxton Senior Adult Day Care in Alabama’s Black Belt Region. In this economically depressed area, she recognized a need to provide seniors with a safe, nurturing environment. The Braxton Senior Adult Day Care allows caregivers to continue working or provides a break from the day-to-day care of loved ones. Today, at the age of 90, Braxton continues to work daily at the day care.

Braxton is an avid golfer who represented Alabama in the National Senior Olympics for the past 20 years. She organized an annual golf tournament, whose proceeds go to the Braxton Senior Adult Day Care. The tournament celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2023.

She is a member of the Sunshine People in Demopolis. Senior adults in this organization meet monthly for educational programs and social activities. She helps with both member recruitment and program implementation. Braxton volunteers with Marengo County Human Resource Department programs that focus on educating seniors.

Braxton has organized workshops for seniors including “Marvelous”, a 10-week program focused on physical activities and cooking low-cost healthy meals for seniors. She has consistently engaged seniors in voter registration and is an advocate for senior rights.

Her many appointments include the Alabama Gerontology Society; Alabama Hospital Association, trustee; Bryan W. Whitfield Memorial Hospital Board, chairperson; Demopolis Federal Credit Union, founder and board of directors; Marengo County Historic Preservation, board member; and Marengo County Business and Professional Women, president. Braxton also served on the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission Board and Advisory and Ombudsman committees.

Braxton is an active member of the Christian Chapel Baptist Church where she serves as a Sunday School teacher for senior adults. She has also served as a guest speaker at local churches during Older Americans Month.

Nominated by Annie Robertson





Frank Brown, Jr.

Cullman – Cullman County

Frank Brown, Jr. has dedicated his life and career to caring for the elderly and disabled. His advocacy efforts led to many positive changes in Alabama’s nursing home industry. Brown earned his nursing home administrator license in 1976 and continues to maintain his license.

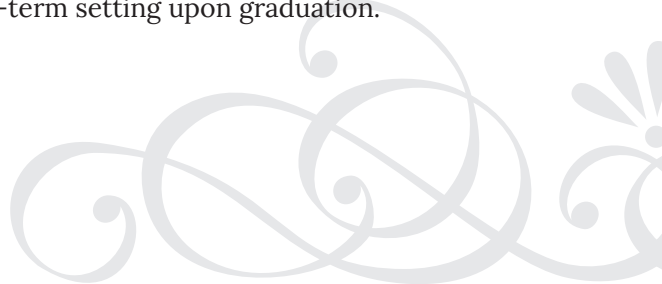
Brown served as chairman of the board for the Alabama Nursing Home Association nine terms: 1988, 1992, 1997, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016, and 2017. He was a key leader who worked to make Alabama one of the first states to have all nursing homes equipped with fully automated fire sprinkler systems. These sprinkler systems improved resident safety, saved lives, and gave staff and families peace of mind.

He volunteered countless hours on several state government and non-profit boards: Certificate of Need Board for the State Health Planning and Development Agency, chairman; Alabama Statewide Health Coordinating Council, chairman; Alabama Medicaid Advisory Commission, executive committee; Alabama Sheriffs Youth Ranch, chairman; and Alabama Sports Hall of Fame, board member. Brown’s work on these boards helped expand health care access for senior citizens and ensured Medicaid access for senior citizens.

Brown owned and operated seven skilled nursing care centers, an assisted living facility, and an inpatient psychiatric hospital that specialized in care for geriatric patients through his company, USA Healthcare. He also operated a physician service, medical supply company, and long-term care pharmacy that were focused on serving residents of nursing homes. He recently retired from actively owning and operating nursing homes.

Upon Brown’s retirement, the Alabama Nursing Home Association and the Alabama Nursing Home Association Education Foundation endowed a nursing scholarship in his honor at the University of Alabama School of Nursing. The scholarship provide funds to students pursuing a nursing degree who plan to practice in a long-term setting upon graduation.

Nominated by Katrina Magdon





Harold Crouch

Chatom – Washington County

Chatom Mayor Harold Crouch has worked to improve the quality of life for senior citizens through a wide variety of projects and activities. Crouch secured funding for the Chatom Nutrition Center for Seniors and is an avid supporter of safe and secure apartment complexes for senior tenants. He is an advocate for safe outdoor activities for seniors that include walking trails, a modern senior-friendly golf course, and a pickleball court.

Under his leadership as chairman the Washington County Nursing Home facilities have been upgraded to provide a comfortable and enjoyable environment for residents. Crouch serves as a mentor and supporter of the Washington County Retired Teachers Association, which provides activities for seniors. He has worked with local senior citizens groups to secure their input on various projects and developments in the community.

After he retired as a government, economics, and history teacher, Crouch ran for his first public office, city council, in 1994. After serving two terms, he ran for mayor. He is now serving his seventh term as mayor of Chatom – over 27 years.

Some of his distinguished awards include Alabama Hospital Association Trustee of the Year, Washington County Hall of Fame member, University of West Alabama College of Education Alumni Achievement Award, Chatom Jaycee of the Year Award, Walmart Good Works 2000 American Hometown Leadership Award, Washington County Volunteer of the Year Award, and The Heritage Registry of Who's Who.

Crouch is a member of the First Baptist Church of Chatom where he volunteers to provide services for elderly church members. He also volunteers with the United Way of South Alabama and the Washington County Public Library.

Nominated by Cleophus Stephens





Ruby Landis Denson

Vestavia Hills – Jefferson County

For 30 years, Ruby Landis Denson served as president of the Vestavia Hills Senior Citizens Association. Upon taking office, she appointed a board of directors, delegated duties, and planned delicious meals, often preparing side dishes herself. She personally decorated tables with a festive or holiday theme and recognized and celebrated birthdays. She sought out and engaged professional musicians and story tellers with reminiscent repertoires that kept toes tapping and hands clapping with rapt attention. She made this a day highly anticipated by the 75-90 seniors regularly attending the luncheons. Denson recognized that for many it was the only opportunity to socialize.

When grant money became available to help provide senior citizen facilities, Denson was asked to be Vestavia Hills' emissary. She met with officials, helped plan and design, and shopped for furnishings and decorations. She also prepared a schedule for activities and recruited other seniors to be available for assistance.

Denson served as Beautification Board chair for 4 years (equivalency of official hostess.) She planned the annual City Hall open house for citizens to meet elected officials and employees and tour facilities. She coordinated the annual month-long Dogwood Festival including the Dogwood Queen pageant and court. She encouraged pride in beautiful yards and organized seasonal judging of neighborhoods and recognized winners with awards at a special luncheon prepared and hosted by the board with city officials attending. She counseled and assisted in the organization of the one and only Vestavia Hills Men's Garden Club.

Outside the realm of the Beautification Board, she chaired Project 31 which involved landscaping of Highway 31; chaired a project to acquire columns for structure at the south entrance to city; sought out by Water Works Board to mediate with upset residents regarding plans to build huge water tank in neighborhood. All endeavors were successful.

Denson volunteered several years in the office of the newly chartered Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce. She organized the Vista Club, the first women's service group in Vestavia Hills. Under her presidency, members worked with children with disabilities and volunteered in the new city library.

For 12 years Denson served as president of her 125-member Sunday School class. She spent time preparing food for sick and shut-ins and providing transportation to appointments. For many, she was a confidant and counselor.

Nominated by Sara Wuska



Fred D. Gray, Sr.

Tuskegee – Macon County

Fred D. Gray, Sr. is an American civil rights attorney, preacher, activist, and former state legislator. He received a Juris Doctor degree from Case Western Reserve University School of Law in 1954. At the time no law school in Alabama would accept African Americans.

During the Civil Rights Movement, Gray came to prominence working with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., E.D. Nixon, and others. In some of his first cases as an attorney, Gray defended Claudette Colvin and later Rosa Parks, who were charged with disorderly conduct for refusing to seat themselves in the rear of segregated city buses.

In 1963, Gray filed the *Lee v. Macon County Board of Education* case, which in 1967 resulted in a three-judge panel of U.S. District Judges ordering all Alabama public schools not already subject to court orders to desegregate. Lawsuits filed by Gray helped desegregate more than 100 local school systems, as well as all public colleges and universities in Alabama.

In 1970, Gray, along with Thomas J. Reed, became the first African Americans elected as legislators in Alabama since Reconstruction. Gray's district included Tuskegee and parts of Barbour, Bullock, and Macon counties.

Gray represented plaintiffs in the class-action lawsuit about the controversial federal Tuskegee Syphilis Study. In 1975, Gray achieved a successful settlement for \$10 million and medical treatment for 72 people of the original 399 who were still living.

In 1980, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference awarded Gray its Drum Major Award. In 1996, the American Bar Association awarded Gray its Spirit of Excellence Award (having awarded him its Equal Justice Award in 1977). The National Bar Association awarded him its C. Frances Stradford Award. In 2002, Gray became the first African American president of the Alabama Bar Association. In 2006, the NAACP recognized Gray's accomplishments with the William Robert Ming Advocacy Award, citing the spirit of financial and personal sacrifice displayed in his legal work.

In 2022, the University of Alabama School of Law and Princeton University awarded Gray honorary doctorates. President Joe Biden presented Gray with the Presidential Medal of Freedom on July 7, 2022.

Nominated by Dr. Florence Pace-Tyner



Peggy Harris

Cullman – Cullman County

Peggy Harris retired from the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service as a county agent in 1995 with 31 years of service. During that time, she worked with several programs advocating for youth in Cullman County, working for their welfare and education. She is involved in charitable and community causes. Harris is the president of the Cullman Pilot Club, Secretary of the Cullman Pilot Light Home Board, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, City of Cullman Tree Commission, local chapter of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees, acting secretary and membership chair of the Cullman Chapter of the Alabama Retired State Employees Association (ARSEA), and has been recently elected as the North Regional Vice-President of the ARSEA. She is a member of the General Federation of Women Club. She has served several years on the ARSEA Foundation Board which raises funds to provide contributions to the Elderly Nutrition Program, and senior centers. She organizes an annual Educational Expo and Wellness Fair for retired public employees.

Harris has participated in senior citizen informational and educational activities including providing transportation. She has helped others remain active leaders. Her work with the Pilot Club in Cullman has had a lasting effect on the community. With her encouragement, the growth of volunteerism has been felt throughout the senior community.

She received the Angel Award from ARSEA in 2002 and in 2021 the ARSEA Eagle Award for distinguished service. In 1984, she was given the Award for Excellence from the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service.

Through Coterie and Share Clubs, Harris has contributed to fundraising efforts for the Leukemia Society, Red Cross, Cullman County Library, Adult Activity Center, and the Margaret Jean Jones Center. Harris describes her favorite activity with the Coterie Club as the “Rosie the Riveter” program where Fran Carter, an 86-year-old real-life Rosie from Homewood, spoke to their group.

Nominated by Sara Phillips





Charles L. Lett, Sr. M.D.

Valley Grande – Dallas County

Dr. Charles L. Lett, Sr. served as a general surgeon in Dallas County for over 41 years. Lett first knew he wanted to enter the medical field while attending Stillman College in Tuscaloosa. Lett spent 13 years training to become a surgeon. After four years at Stillman, Lett then headed to Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, and began five years of surgical training in the Cornell University Affiliated Hospitals of New York City, Nassau County and Long Island, all in New York.

In 1979, Lett returned to his hometown of Selma to open his Surgical Medical Practice. Growing up in Selma, Lett was aware of the city's socioeconomic status. He felt a calling to return home and take care of the people of his hometown.

Lett has served Selma's medical community as chief of staff for two four-year terms. He has served on the board of trustees for the Selma Medical Center (now Vaughan Regional Medical Center) and the board of trustees for the former Good Samaritan Hospital. Lett served as a consultant for the Lighthouse Convalescent Rehabilitation Center.

In addition to being a surgeon, Lett has served as the pastor of Aimwell Baptist Church for the last 31 years. He gives presentations on health issues to elderly church groups and supports numerous local volunteer opportunities for seniors.

Nominated by Earnest Tate





Vanessa McKinney

Clanton – Chilton County

For 30 years, Vanessa McKinney has been the director of Senior Connection, a group in Chilton County whose mission is to allow older adults to meet others, improve health and fitness, learn about the community, and make new friends. What started as an exercise program with 20 members, Senior Connection, under McKinney's leadership, became much more. Senior Connection offers a variety of learning and volunteer opportunities, art classes, sports, exercises programs, games, and social activities to over 600 members.

During a majority of the pandemic, Senior Connection was open. This decision provided a much-needed lifeline for older adults who felt isolated and alone. McKinney and her volunteers worked to ensure members were taken care of during the pandemic. They contacted them regularly, and made sure food, medications, and other needs were met.

McKinney works with the local Methodist Church in the Bread of Life Ministry, which provides food to those in need. She started a food pantry at Senior Connection to benefit older adults. She is active with the local Community Action program, which provides a variety of assistance to people in need. McKinney is a former board member of the Middle Alabama Area Agency on Aging.

She is a committee member for Relay for Life, the March of Dimes, and the Arthritis Foundation. She has raised money for Butterfly Bridge, an advocacy group for abused children. She partners with other nonprofits such as the Lion's Club and Rotary Club to raise funds to benefit the community. McKinney has hosted a variety of events that benefit Chilton County older adults such as the annual Older Americans Month picnic, health fairs, concerts, and open houses.

McKinney is a 2001 graduate of the Chilton County Chamber of Commerce Leadership Program, and she received the 2013 Lion's Club Pillar of the Community Award. In 2016, Senior Connection received the Community Spirit Award from the Chilton County Chamber of Commerce. McKinney was selected as 2017 Chilton County Citizen of the Year, and was the 2020 Chilton Chamber of Commerce Champion Award recipient.

Nominated by Carolyn Fortner



Carolyn S. Middleton

Montgomery – Montgomery County

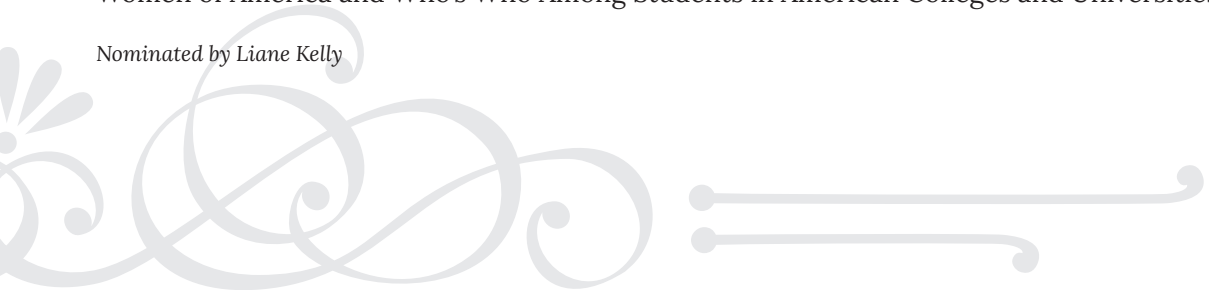
Carolyn S. Middleton has served as retiree representative on the State Employees' Insurance Board since 2015. She is currently serving her second term. She retired in May 2013 as state budget officer of Alabama, working for the State Department of Finance. After retirement, she went back to work for the finance director in 2015 as a retired state employee for almost two years.

Middleton worked for the Alabama Department of Finance - Executive Budget Office since 1977. She was responsible for the State General Fund and the Education Trust Fund budgets for Alabama, making revenue estimates, preparing legislation, analyzing budgets, and assisting with bond issues. In 2006, Middleton was honored as the State Budget Officer of the Year by the National Association of State Budget Officers. She was also chairman of the First Readings Committee for Governors Robert Bentley and Bob Riley, reviewing all legislation introduced in any legislative session.

Through her position on the State Employees' Health Insurance Board, she has helped keep insurance costs level for retired state employees who use the health insurance coverage. This is a tremendous financial help to those living on a fixed income.

In retirement, Middleton volunteers for Medical Outreach Ministries, a free health clinic in Montgomery, two days per week. Middleton and her husband, Jimmie, are members of Frazer Free Methodist Church in Montgomery where they remain active in many aspects of the church, including serving on the board at Frazer Church in charge of outreach. They are board members of the Capitol City Corvette Club. She is a member of the American Society of Certified Public Managers, as well as Alabama Retired State Employee Association, the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Auburn University Montgomery Alumni Association, and the American Academy of Certified Public Managers. She is listed in Outstanding Young Women of America and Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities.

Nominated by Liane Kelly





Nathan Williams, Jr.

Montgomery – Montgomery County

Since 1981, Nathan Williams, Jr. has served as Sheridan Heights Community president. His service to this community has been one of loving care, particularly to the seniors. At monthly community meetings, Williams enlists city officials to be present to address concerns and answer questions from community members. He coordinates the yearly Neighborhood Night Out event for Sheridan Heights and an annual Christmas party.

Williams participates monthly in Senior Adults Living Triumphantly (SALT). These monthly meetings provide seniors with socialization and education. He delivers meals daily to the sick and shut-ins in Sheridan Heights. Williams has also assisted in serving meals with the Salvation Army.

Williams serves as a voting advocate and assists with transportation to polls. He was a foot soldier during the Civil Rights Movement and shares his experiences yearly with collegiate volunteers who visit the area.

He is an active member of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church where he serves as chairman of the deacon board. Williams also sings in the Male Chorus and Mass Choir.

Nominated by Gilda Bell and Jacqueline Hudson





Joe Mack Ammons

Roanoke – Randolph County

(Posthumous)

Joe Mack Ammons settled in Roanoke after retiring from the military. He was a founder of Building Better Children (BBC), a non-profit organization. City leaders depended on Ammons to help keep children of the community on the right path.

Ammons was a frequent visitor at the Knollwood Baptist Retirement Center. He would assist the men with shaving and played dominoes with them. He worked closely with the Randolph County Learning Center (RCLC). RCLC is a school for adults and children with disabilities. He volunteered, assisted with raising funds, and served on the RCLC board for several years.

Ammons began a mentoring program for the Roanoke City School System. The program paired fourth through eighth graders with senior citizens in the community. The pairs would play games, enjoy music, eat, and have a lot of fun. Ammons hosted large events for the program for Valentine's Day, Christmas, and the end of the school year.

He was a Community Action Agency board member, Rotary Club member, and American Legion Chaplin. He served at Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church as a deacon and adult Sunday school teacher. Ammons organized and assisted with the annual Veteran's Day Parade for the city of Roanoke. Ammons died December 4, 2021.

Nominated by Lula D. Harris





Roland Harper

Grand Bay – Mobile County

(Posthumous)

Roland Harper was a member of the Grand Bay Cemetery Association board and served as ad hoc manager of the veterans' plots in the Grand Bay Cemetery. He saw that gravesites were kept neat and decorated with a small American flag on Memorial Day. Harper organized and led the observation of Wreaths Across America at the cemetery.

Harper petitioned for two sections of Highway 90 in the Grand Bay area to be named for two soldiers killed in the line of duty in Vietnam. He helped veterans file paperwork for benefits, found the right telephone numbers and people to call, and helped veterans navigate bureaucratic red tape.

He was a member of the Jaycee's, Civitan Club, and Citizens for a Better Grand Bay. Harper was a regular participant at the Grand Bay Community Center and active in its senior citizens program. He was a member of the Friends of the Library and pushed for the establishment of the Grand Bay branch of the Mobile County Library.

Roland was an exemplary writer. He published a book of his childhood adventures, "Tales of the Dirty Dozen." All proceeds from the sale of this book were contributed to the local library. He would compose long posts and talk about life as a senior citizen. Roland wrote about how things were changing as he got older, what the world looked like from the perspective of someone in their 80's and 90's, and always infused his writing with humor. Harper Died December 21, 2022

Nominated by Marcia Byars Willett



ALABAMA SENIOR CITIZENS
HALL OF FAME



2023 LIFE ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Fred Myers

FLORENCE

Vera L. Smith

GORDON

Frankie Thomas

MONTGOMERY





Fred Myers

Florence – Lauderdale County

Fred Myers made his mark as a writer and photographer, working with the Cooperative Extension Services in seven states. He also worked across the United States with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Myers first job was field editor of the *Indiana Farmers Guide Magazine*, where he later became managing editor.

In 1962, Myers joined the staff of TVA's National Fertilizer Development Center as writer, editor, and photographer. Over 52,000 of Myers' TVA photographs are in the permanent collections section of the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Myers also completed special projects with Time-Life Books and Time Magazine. Myers taught local community classes in photography for 17 years at the local YMCA, Tuscumbia Arts Center, and the University of North Alabama.

After retiring in 1988, Myers began extensive travels through the lower 48 states and 34 countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa. He and his wife, Joan, logged more than 41,000 miles on America's inland river system. Myers used these experiences to publish three cruise guides for the navigable waters of Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

Myers writes an on-line biweekly column, "Country Boy Logic." He shares his experiences with fellow elders and urges them to take the initiative to hand down to younger generations wisdom they have learned throughout their lives.

In 2011, Myers received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Association of Agricultural Editors. This is the highest award the association gives its members.

Nominated by Ralph Ballew





Vera L. Smith

Gordon – Houston County

Vera L. Smith was instrumental in organizing the Gordon Senior Citizens program. She served as co-coordinator for Gordon Senior Citizens from 2006-2011. Smith spearheaded numerous activities including making aprons, quilts, coasters, and other items to sell at local parades. Smith organized many field trips, planned Older Americans Day, and founded the annual senior fashion show.

Smith organized a Christmas dinner with senior citizens and local, county, and state officials. This tradition still continues today. She was authorized to take applications for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Because she can travel to the seniors in need to take applications, seniors no longer have to stand in line or find transportation. Smith currently serves on the advisory council for the Gordon Senior Program.

She is a member of St. Mary Baptist Church and the St. Mary District Matrons. Smith visits nursing homes and checks on the elderly weekly. She has been instrumental in the success of the annual Mother's Day celebration, where families are fed and provided with household goods. As an Eastern Star Member, she is involved in outreach to the needy, homeless, and elderly.

Smith taught 20 years in the Houston County School System. She served for 24 years as a member of the Gordon Town Council. Smith is a member of the Alabama Retiree Education Association and National Education Association. She has received certificates of appreciation from Congressman Bobby Bright, the Salvation Army, St. Mary Baptist Church, St. Mary District Matrons, and the Gordon Town Council. In 2012, she was awarded the Gordon Senior Citizens Award for outstanding service. In 2022, she was crowned Senior Citizen Queen.

Nominated by Gwendolyn Howard



Frankie Thomas

Montgomery – Montgomery County

Frankie Thomas has been a pioneer and advocate for senior citizens in Alabama for over four decades. She served as the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) director for Montgomery, Pike, Elmore, and Autauga counties. She currently works with Easter Seals Central Alabama as the state SCSEP director. Thomas has recruited and placed over 1,933 SCEP participants.

Thomas is an advocate for older Americans on the local, state, and national levels. She has received numerous awards and recognitions from governors, mayors, colleagues, and from the people she serves.

In addition to her work, she volunteers her time to projects throughout Alabama. Thomas founded a food program in Birmingham for low-income citizens. She began yearly fruit drives and food drives through her church, Greater Grace Victorious Assembly. Thomas participates in the Christmas Clearing House, which provides gifts for local children and the Angel Tree program to provide gifts to children of inmates. In 2022, she coordinated the Stand Down for homeless veterans' event.

Nominated by Yvette Gilbert



ALABAMA SENIOR CITIZENS
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2023 SPECIAL AWARDS

Community Service Award

Annie Hawkins
TUSKEGEE

Catherine Glaze Stakely
TUSKEGEE

Connie Thompson
JACKSONVILLE

AAA Award

Roger Baine
SAMSON

Education Award

Ola McCray
TUSKEGEE

Willie Mae Powell
SHORTER

Vera Dumas Webb
TUSKEGEE

Government Award

Dr. Lucenia Williams Dunn
TUSKEGEE

Johnny L. Ford
TUSKEGEE

Louis Maxwell
TUSKEGEE

Medical Award

Doretha Heard
TUSKEGEE

Performing Arts Award

Dyann Robinson
TUSKEGEE

Religion Award

Althea P. Ford
MOBILE

William & Edna Walker, Sr.
BESSEMER

Brenda Yon
DOTHAN

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD



Annie Hawkins

Tuskegee – Macon County

Annie Hawkins was instrumental in founding the Macedonia Community Volunteer Fire Department. During the process of researching vital information and incorporating the department, Hawkins served as secretary and then treasurer. She was essential in the recruitment of firefighters, dispatchers, and support personnel to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the fire department.

Hawkins worked diligently to ensure that Macedonia and surrounding communities received emergency fire protection. Today, at the age of 90, she is secretary for the Macedonia Volunteer Fire Department.

Nominated by Dr. Florence Pace Tyner

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD



Catherine Glaze Stakely

Tuskegee – Macon County

Catherine Glaze Stakely served the senior citizens of Macon County over 40 years as an employee of the Alabama Department of Human Services in Adult Protection Services. She was committed to finding solutions to senior citizen abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Stakely volunteers at her community nursing home where she enjoys playing bingo with residents. She has served on the John A. Andrew Hospital board, Town Creek District board, and the Macon County Council of Retardation and Rehabilitation Activity Center board. Stakely volunteers with Under the Tree Ministry, which provides food to those in need. She also volunteers with numerous ministries of Bethel Missionary Baptist Church.

She has worked as a correspondent for the Alabama Journal, Montgomery Advertiser, and the Birmingham Post Herald News. Stakely was featured in Jet Magazine for contributions to the Tuskegee Syphilis Study while working at the Tuskegee News.

Nominated by Dr. Florence Pace Tyner

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD



Connie Thompson

Jacksonville – Calhoun County

Connie Thompson volunteers daily in her community. She coordinates delivery of the community Thanksgiving meal, volunteers with Jacksonville United Way of Caring, serves on the United Methodist Church (UMC) North Alabama Board of Pensions & Health Benefits, and chairs the Board of Superintendency for the Cheaha District of the UMC. She volunteers at the Jacksonville Christian Outreach Center and Legacy Village Assisted Living.

Thompson is president of the Jacksonville Exchange Club. She is a Jacksonville Housing Authority board member, and volunteers with the Jackson American Legion. Thompson serves as programs coordinator for Jacksonville First United Methodist Church.

Nominated by Ellen Hurst

AREA AGENCY ON AGING AWARD



Roger Baine

Samson – Geneva County

Roger Baine has been a volunteer at the Samson Senior Citizens Center for over 12 years. He plans activities, mans the grill for fundraisers, and drives the center's van for trips and activities. He has been recognized as Volunteer of the Year several times by the senior center.

Baine has served as councilman for the Samson City Council. He has served on the South Alabama Regional Council on Aging board for five years where he has been an advocate for senior centers. He is a member of Samson First Baptist Church, where he is a deacon and serves in many leadership capacities.

Nominated by Sherry Baine

EDUCATION AWARD



Ola McCray

Tuskegee – Macon County

Ola McCray received her Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education from Alabama State University. She began her career teaching kindergarten at Lewis Adams Elementary School in Tuskegee. McCray worked as lead teacher with the Tuskegee Macon County Head Start Program for over 35 years. She has received many awards and recognitions for her work as a teacher, including the “Apple for the Teacher” award in Macon County.

After retiring, McCray became active with the Macon County Senior Citizens program. She enjoys being active in her community.

Nominated by Dr. Florence Pace-Tyner

EDUCATION AWARD



Willie Mae Powell

Shorter – Macon County

Willie Mae Powell attended Tuskegee University, where she earned a degree in early childhood education. She taught in the Macon County School system for over 25 years. She currently runs an after-school enrichment program in Shorter. Powell has also conducted numerous General Educational Development (GED) tests and commercial driver’s license programs for the citizens of Shorter and west Macon communities.

Powell has served as mayor of Shorter for over 25 years. She helped bring numerous businesses and two car manufacturing plants to Shorter during her time as mayor.

Nominated by Dr. Florence Pace-Tyner

EDUCATION AWARD



Vera Dumas Webb

Tuskegee – Macon County

Vera Webb attended Alabama State University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a double minor in special education and home economics. She worked for 42 years in education before retiring in 2010. Webb has been a substitute teacher in Macon County since her retirement.

Webb worked as a Head Start Center director for 14 years in Montgomery and as a private duty nurse for Baptist Hospital. She is the administrator for True-Life Church in Tuskegee and president of Sisters and Brothers in Action program. She volunteers at Magnolia Nursing Home every Thursday leading a Bible study.

Nominated by Dr. Florence Pace-Tyner

GOVERNMENT AWARD



Lucenia Williams Dunn

Tuskegee – Macon County

Lucenia Dunn is the first female mayor of Tuskegee. Dunn served as program director for the Center for Educational Action, University of Pittsburgh. She managed the development of improved curriculum to ensure the success of African American children. This project also included African American History, to ensure all students learned of the contributions made by African Americans in the United States and the world.

In Washington, D.C., Dunn worked with the National Council of Negro Women. She managed national programs in education, economic development, and health education. In her position as director of the Bethune Education Center, Dunn focused on improving the lives of women through economic and community development projects and programs. This included the management of the Black Family Reunion, a festival held in five major cities with over 1 million people.

Her professional experience in government includes organizing the first Office of Public Information for the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs and serving as Manager of Operations for the Office of the City Administrator, District of Columbia Government, Washington, DC. In this experience, Dr. Dunn helped to design and implement the “Model for Excellence Program” to improve government operations and services to citizens.

Nominated by Dr. Florence Pace-Tyner

GOVERNMENT AWARD



Johnny L. Ford

Tuskegee – Macon County

Political leader Johnny Ford was born August 23, 1942, in Midway, Alabama to Bertha and Willie Patterson, and was raised by his Aunt Tennessee Ford and Uncle Charlie Benjamin Ford. In 1967, Ford worked as a strategist on the presidential campaign of Robert Kennedy. After Kennedy's assassination in 1968, Ford returned to Tuskegee and began working as director of the Model Cities Program.

From 1970 to 1972, he served as assistant director of the Multi-Racial Corporation and managed Fred Gray's campaign for the Alabama House of Representatives. Ford also worked in the Montgomery office of the U.S. Department of Justice to ensure compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In 1972, Ford was elected Mayor of Tuskegee, as its first black mayor.

That same year, Ford co-founded the Southern Conference of Black Mayors, which later evolved into the National Conference of Black Mayors. Ford later established the World Conference of Mayors, Inc. in 1984, which convened mayors from the U.S., Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.

In 1998, he was elected state representative of the 82nd District from Macon County. In 2004, Ford resigned from the state legislature and was re-elected as Mayor of Tuskegee. In 2012, Ford was once again elected as Mayor of Tuskegee and was sworn into an eighth non-consecutive term. Ford is currently serving as City Councilman for District II.

Ford served as president of the Alabama League of Municipalities and president of the National Conference of Black Mayors. He was also a member of the Alabama Foreign Trade Commission, Alabama Municipal Electric Authority, Kappa Alpha Psi, and Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church. Ford was a former chair of the National Unity Alliance and was founding president of the Tuskegee Optimist Club.

Nominated by Dr. Florence Pace-Tyner

GOVERNMENT AWARD



Louis Maxwell

Tuskegee – Macon County

Since 2008, Louis Maxwell has been serving as chairman of Macon County Commission. He is the chief administrative officer for Macon County Government and is responsible for day-to-day operations. He is also the presiding officer and spokesperson of the Macon County Commission.

As chief administrative officer of Macon County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Maxwell can be found at the forefront of most community engagements. Not only does RSVP enhance the quality of life for individuals 55 and older, but it also expresses its appreciation to seniors in numerous ways.

Nominated by Dr. Florence Pace-Tyner

MEDICAL AWARD



Doretha Heard

Tuskegee – Macon County

Doretha Heard is a retired Oncology Nurse Case Manager (ONCM) and resides in Tuskegee. She served Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) as an ONCM for 20 years. During that time, she developed and coordinated the Oncology Case Management Program. Heard is a retired Commander, US Navy Nurse Corps, served as department head for Allied Health with Job Corps at Tuskegee University and Intensive Care Unit (ICU), and a charge nurse at Edge Memorial Hospital in Troy.

Heard co-founded a Cancer Support Group in 2012 out of a need for cancer support and resources in Macon County. In 2016, the group was named Macon M.E.A.N.S. for Cancer Support with a mission to empower the community by providing Mentorship, Education, Advocacy, Nutrition, and Support services. The organization's most recent initiative was the "Check Ya Self Campaign." Thirteen male and female students from Tuskegee University and the Macon County School System participated in educational and outreach activities to increase knowledge of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), HPV-related cancers, and the HPV vaccine.

She actively participates in her church, AME Zion Church. Heard volunteers with the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association as a Basic Life Support training instructor in the community. Heard is a 3-time recipient of the Navy Achievement Medal, and she received the 2010 VA Woman of Excellence Award.

Nominated by Dr. Florence Pace-Tyner

PERFORMING ARTS AWARD



Dyann Robinson

Tuskegee – Macon County

Miss Dyann Robinson is a native of Tuskegee. As a professional dancer, she has been a member of dance companies in the United States and abroad: The Dance Company of the National Centre for African American Artists in Boston, The Dance Theatre of Boston, her own Chamber Dance Troupe, and Concert Ballet Duo in Washington D. C., and Maurice Bejart's Ballet of the Twentieth Century based in Brussels, Belgium.

Robinson performed on Broadway as a member of the original cast of the hit musical "Bubbling Brown Sugar," where she was also assistant choreographer. She has since staged many professional touring companies of that show, as well as directing a production produced by the City of Tuskegee at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in 1987, 1988, and 1989.

Robinson has taught dance at Howard University, The National Center for African American Artists in Boston, The Dance Theatre of Boston, the Dance Theatre of Harlem, and City Dance Theatre in Tuskegee.

She founded Tuskegee Repertory Theatre, Inc. in 1991, and purchased the building which is now its home. She is a recipient of the Alabama State Council of the Arts Governor's Arts Award, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival Pioneer Award, and the 2017 Trailblazer Award from Alabama State University Theatre and Dance. She is a past member of the Alabama State Council on the Arts and was awarded a 2012 Alabama State Council on the Arts Fellowship in Drama.

Nominated by Dr. Florence Pace-Tyner

RELIGION AWARD



Althea P. Ford

Mobile – Mobile County

Althea Ford is a devoted member of Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church, where she has served in many roles. She served as chairman and co-chairman of the deaconess board, children's department Sunday school teacher, treasurer of the Foreign Mission, Vacation Bible School teacher, children's department special event program chair, member of the budget committee, treasurer of General Mission, and secretary of Senior Mission Choir. Currently she is co-chairman of General Mission, spiritual youth advisor, organizer of the youth ensemble and is the oldest living member of the Robinson-Carson Mission Circle.

Ford is president of the Mobile Baptist Sunlight District Women Auxiliary. This auxiliary aids over 56 churches with mission events and outreach. During the pandemic, she began a Thursday Bible study by Zoom. She continues to host Bible studies every third Thursday by Zoom for senior adults.

Ford volunteers with the Providence Outreach Center, teaching computer classes for senior citizens. She and her husband visit seniors who are home-bound or in the hospital and bring communion. Ford founded the Culinary Committee, a group that prepares 130 food trays, once a month, for the homeless.

Nominated by Dorothy Bell

RELIGION AWARD



William & Edna Walker, Sr.

Bessemer – Jefferson County

For over 40 years, William Walker served as pastor of new Bethlehem Baptist Church in Bessemer. Edna Walker served by her husband's side every step of the way. The Homeless Ministry and the Senior Ministry are two programs the Walkers began that still serve the community today.

Both Walkers assisted in the creation of Ministers in Action and the Ministers in Action Boosters. Ministers in Action are pastors and ministers of the Bessemer community who assist families with financial burdens. The Ministers in Action Boosters raise funds. They organize annual concerts, yard sales, and different programs as fundraising efforts for the program's use.

Nominated by Debra Hunter

RELIGION AWARD



Brenda Yon

Dothan – Houston County

Brenda Yon has been the pastor of Rocky Branch Congregational Holiness Church in Dothan for over 45 years. Her congregation is comprised of many senior citizens. Yon provides these members transportation to appointments, grocery shopping, or to visit family members. Yon has welcomed members to stay in her home when they don't feel like being alone.

Yon founded a food bank at her church. The food bank provides a meal for church members and the local community who are in need. Church members have relied on Yon to provide prayers and comfort during hard times and happy times. Yon was named in the top four of Remarkable Women of the Wiregrass.

Nominated by Tonya Sanders

COUPLES MARRIED
 65 YEARS 
OR MORE

Huey & Sabra Barnett
WALKER

Harlon & Sara King
COLBERT

Don & Sue Bowman
DEKALB

Kenneth & Mary Martin
ESCAMBIA

Bill & Martha Burdette
BLOUNT

Leo & Hazel Martin
LAUDERDALE

Nolen & Barbara Camp
MONTGOMERY

Alton & Rene Massey
BLOUNT

Alton & Mary Cowan
TALLADEGA

Bob & Jackie Parker
CULLMAN

Brad & Louise Farris
COLBERT

Gene & JoAnn Powell
JEFFERSON

Jack & Barbara Foster
ETOWAH

Richard & Carol Sheridan
COLBERT

George & Iris Hamaker
JEFFERSON

James & Doris Short
WALKER

Wayne & Jane Herrington
TUSCALOOSA

Frank & Evelene Smelley
TUSCALOOSA

Dale & Dru Howse
JEFFERSON

Louis & Billie Thorpe
DALE

Tellis & Kate Hudson
LEE

William & Edna Walker, Sr.
JEFFERSON

Ralph & June Kenney
TALLAPOOSA

Samuel & Martha Whitehurst
COFFEE

SENIOR CITIZENS
 100 YEARS 
OF AGE OR OLDER

James L. Carson
BLOUNT

Nancy Martin
MONROE

Comer Chambliss
MACON

Catherine Means
GREENE

Gladyce Cornelius
CALHOUN

Annie R. Mosley
LEE

Mary Ella Crenshaw
TALLAPOOSA

Willie M. Reese
MONTGOMERY

Fletcher Curry
BUTLER

Rebecca Reid
COLBERT

Harriet Hanna
MACON

L. J. Spotts
WASHINGTON

Bernice Stitt Hendricks
JEFFERSON

Malinda Franklin Sutton
TUSCALOOSA

Bessie King
DALLAS

Louise Taylor
TUSCALOOSA

Robert Shafton Kong
AUTAUGA

Azola Williams
PICKENS

Nell Hill Long
MADISON



