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THE SARASOTA COUNTY NAACP 38TH ANNUAL FREEDOM AWARDS BANQUET HIGHLIGHTS LOCAL TRAILBLAZERS ‘THRIVING TOGETHER IN UNITY’

The annual Freedom Awards banquet acknowledges distinguished youth, business leaders and organizations advocating for social, racial, political and educational equality for all residents.

The Sarasota County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Sarasota County NAACP) is honoring local Sarasota youth, business leaders and organizations who positively impact our community at the 38th Annual Freedom Awards banquet on Thursday, October 5th at 6 p.m. inside the luxuriant Hyatt Regency Sarasota, located at 1000 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota, FL 34236.

“We are honoring individuals and organizations that consistently demonstrate a selfless duty to serving our community,” states Trevor D. Harvey, Sarasota County NAACP president. “It is exciting to watch Sarasota transform into the melting pot, where people know they are accepted as they are, and model how society is supposed to be.”

The 2023 Freedom Awards honorees are Sarah Wertheimer, Embracing Our Differences executive director (Community Service), Ron Turner, Sarasota County supervisor of elections (Public Service), Retired Riverview High School Varsity Boys Basketball Coach James Ward (Lifetime Achievement), the Gamma Xi Boulé Foundation (Education), Educator Jacqueline Jones and Rev. John Walker Jr., seasoned Christian Methodist Episcopal Church Leader, (President’s Award), 2023 Bayshore High School Graduates Ariel Samedi and Anastasia Samedi (Rising Stars) and Javaris Williams Jr., MBA (Go Forth and Prosper).

Established in 1951, the Sarasota County NAACP has been instrumental in reducing numerous disparities between local Black and White residents. Renown Community Activist and former Sarasota County NAACP President Neil Humphrey Sr. spearheaded a 10-year beach caravan and wade-in project, including 100 Newtown residents, to combat Blacks being prohibited access to Sarasota County beaches despite the 1964 Civil Rights Act banning discrimination based on race, color, religion sex or national origin. His successor, John Rivers, led a boycott against Sarasota County Schools after it failed to integrate all public schools following the 1954 Supreme Court Brown vs. The Board of Education of Topeka, KS ruling, which declared segregated schools unconstitutional and a violation of the 14th Amendment.

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Since taking the helm in 2006, local Social Justice Icon Trevor D. Harvey has guided the course of social, racial and political equity for Newtown residents, including this year's 'Stay Woke' VoterCade that made Sarasota one of its 15 stops in the Florida NAACP tour to increase voter registration among Blacks. His leadership has been critical to establishing positive relationships with local law enforcement agencies, providing COVID-19 vaccines to Newtown residents and ensuring all Sarasota County residents have equal access to clean and affordable housing.

For more information, including ticket sales and sponsorship opportunities, about the 38th Annual Freedom Awards banquet, contact Cynthia Howard at cshoward1@verizon.net or 941-724-4205.

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