

Recognition Luncheon Award Winners 2022

SISTER MARY VERA AWARD

ArDenay Garner LMSW, CPC, is a survivor who has used her story to engage and empower women within the Syracuse community and beyond. Through her own journey of healing and empowerment she developed the "Your Purpose Accelerator System" for high achieving women over 40. ArDenay is also the founder of the "Campaign 42 National Scholarship Foundation" that provides scholarship opportunities for 42 women who are working to obtain degrees in Social Work. She's a published author who shares her story of abuse and survival with compassion and love as well as the lessons learned through her experiences. ArDenay decided to allow her pain and struggle to become a template towards healing for others. She's published two books entitled 'Divine Invitations; the 7 Spiritual Lessons to Relationships' which is a nonfiction narrative of her story of survival through domestic violence and 'Stand Up!' which engages several women as co-authors who recall pivotal moments in their lives and how they discovered their resiliency. ArDenay has a gift of helping others be accountable to themselves while holding them gently as they navigate through their trauma and discover their own path to healing. She's a powerful and yet quiet storm that provides safe spaces for others to be brave and empowered. She has touched more women over the years than can be counted. She works to provide a place for those she encounters and works with them to discover their purpose in this world.

Annette Briggs Memorial Award

Jackie Warren-Moore, spoke out against violence with a bullhorn, a pen, a microphone, and a chalkboard. One of her poems, "Death Wish", describes the complexity of emotions she felt toward a once-trusted uncle who raped her when she was a child. Jackie read that poem at countless events, and reported that each time she read it, she connected with at least one person in the audience who shared her experience. A number of her poems are about finding strength and believing in yourself. Two examples are "I Got Balls" and "Ego Food", these poems use humor to smash gender stereotypes and celebrate body-positivity. Like Annette Briggs, Jackie Warren-Moore was passionately dedicated to educating the community about domestic and sexual violence. Jackie Warren-Moore was a survivor of family violence and child sexual assault and used poetry and teaching to offer compassion and strength to other survivors. Her mantra, "You are not your circumstances" has been a lifeboat for the many young people she has mentored.

John Lewis "Good Trouble" Award

Arthur Bob Harrison, at age 73, volunteers as a partner in a county-wide credible messenger collaborative sponsored by OCFS's juvenile justice division to ensure that at-risk youth have options that were never available to him. Bob has known systematic racism from a young age. When he was eight, Bob witnessed the Ku Klux Klan drag his grandfather away, and then he and his family were driven out of their home by the same group. After this his family resettled into Syracuse's Pioneer Homes, where Bob spent the majority of his youth. As pre-teens, Bob and his close friend would glance with envy while walking by the boxing gym as they both had hopes of becoming boxers, hopes denied to them because black youth were not allowed to train at the gym. As co-founder and director at Faith and Hope Community Center, Bob has developed and executed a highly successful biweekly, "Boxing and Life Skills" program at Hillbrook Detention Center, while continuing to serve at-risk youth referred by numerous county-wide organizations, as part of the center's anger-management boxing and training program. They plan to incorporate an Attica documentary Bob was in to discuss his time there during the riots in 1971 as an educational tool that will address the potential dangers of internalized racism and systemic oppression. This, along with Faith and Hope's involvement in a state grant aimed toward educating youth regarding the consequences of violent behaviors, have ensured that Faith and Hope's doors remain open to those who need it most.

Chris Kosakowski is an ally and accomplice in his everyday self and that shows up in our community in many ways. Within Vera House, Chris trains staff on how to identify and interrupt microaggressions or racist language, attitudes, and beliefs. He also models how to do this through his ability to both call-out and call-in staff, leaders, interns, AND Board and Foundation members when they have caused harm. He is not afraid to hold folks of any hierarchy accountable. Since becoming Campus Advocacy and Prevention Coordinator, Chris and his team have actively been folding in anti-oppression work with their campus contacts and making connections to the root causes of violence. Additionally, Chris serves as a leader of the Caucus of Color, where he facilitates conversations around internalized oppression, experiences of staff of color, and healing. Outside of Vera House, Chris had taken the lead in advocating for a student at Tully High School who was discriminated against due to his sexual orientation. As a result of Chris's involvement, this student will now be the Grand Marshall at the CNY Pride Festival. After racist comments were targeted at a black Principal at Jamesville-DeWitt High School, Chris was quick to jump on a news interview to spread messages about anti-racism and how to be better allies when witnessing racism.