



Sept. 7, 2023

Harold and Sherren McKenzie Honored with 2023 Madison Award for Civility in the Community

Harold and Sherren McKenzie of State College will be the 2023 recipients of the Madison Award for Civility in the Community, sponsored by Constitution Day Centre Inc. The award honors individuals or organizations that have made longtime contributions to civility and community service, the hallmarks of American democracy.

David Hutchinson, president of Constitution Day Centre Inc., said, "For nearly 50 years, as leaders of the Unity Church of Jesus Christ, Harold and Sherren have selflessly dedicated their lives to the welfare of others, not only to the members of their church, but also to the broader community - often during the most challenging of circumstances.

"Harold's partnership with Tom King, the former Chief of Police for the borough, in the establishment of CCU - Campus and Community in Unity - is a model for how other communities can address difficult issues in a way that is both civil and meaningful," Hutchinson noted.

Pastor Harold and Sherren McKenzie have served as community leaders of Unity Church of Jesus Christ for 46 years, including 45 years in ministry. They led the church to a position of stability and strength in the community. For over 40 years, the couple provided spiritual counseling and assistance to local residents including African-American, Latino, and other people of color. In addition, the couple has stepped in many times to help mediate during State College and Centre County crises.

Harold McKenzie's accomplishments include co-founding Community and Campus in Unity, and the Racial Unity Network, and serving on the town and gown Task Force on Policing and Communities of Color. Harold and Sherren were integral in working with the Osages and the local communities when their son was killed by local police during a crisis call. They received the Forum on Black Affairs Humanitarian Service Award.

Sherren McKenzie is well known for her profound way of connecting with people of different beliefs and backgrounds. She demonstrates great sensitivity to how people are feeling, and assists people who are hurting.

"Sensitivity can change the atmosphere," said Sherren. "People are significant. If we are sensitive to their experiences, have a measure of respect and openness, and a heart of love, we can turn the tide."

Harold McKenzie said “Our Founders disagreed passionately. Yet they chose to respect each other and not cancel each other out. Today, it is more challenging to respectfully disagree. While I may disagree or agree with another person, I need to respect them. The Constitution is a unique document. It is a dream that we – as a government – have not always lived up to, and it still challenges us to realize that dream fully.”

Constitution Day Centre Inc. is a local nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting learning about the U.S. Constitution and civil conversations among people of all beliefs. Activities include annual events and the Madison Award for Civility in the Community. Previous honorees are Pat Daugherty of The Tavern Restaurant (2019); Centre Volunteers in Medicine (2021); and the League of Women Voters of Centre County (2022).

Constitution Day Centre has hosted annual celebrations since 2017. More information is at www.constitutiondaycentre.org or contact: info@constitutiondaycentre.org Follow Constitution Day Centre on Facebook, Instagram, and the YouTube Channel.