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## News Release

For Immediate Release: March 3, 2015

**Share!** Durham announces Human Relations Award winners; <http://bit.ly/1ADrWbv>

### Durham Announces Human Relations Award Winners

DURHAM, N.C. – The City of Durham Human Relations Commission has now recognized five award winners who have distinguished themselves by contributing their time and talents to promoting good human relations in Durham.

In honor of February as Human Relations Month, the City's Human Relations Commission and the City's Neighborhood Improvement Services Department Human Relations Division announced the winners during the 2015 Human Relations Award Ceremony held on Friday, February 27 at the Hayti Heritage Center.

The five honorees were:

- Wanda Boone received the Carlie B. Sessoms Award for her contributions and efforts to make Durham a safer, healthier and better community. She is best known for being the founder of Together for Resilient Youth (TRY). TRY prevents substance abuse among youth and adults by reducing community risk factors through advocacy, education, mobilization and action. Since 2005, through her facilitation, TRY has brought Durham residents together from a broad socio-economic spectrum and provided training, education, and opportunities in the areas of health and wellness. The Carlie B. Sessoms Award commemorates contributions of the late Carlie B. Sessoms, a Durham native who served as chair of the Human Relations Commission and played a major role in improving human relations locally and nationally.
- Brenda Howerton, vice chairman of the Durham County Board of Commissioners, received the Human Rights Award for her advocacy and work in support of human relations within the

Durham community. The Human Rights Award is presented to a local, state or federal lawmaker who has successfully supported or promoted human rights causes and issues.

- Genesis Home received the Housing Award and was recognized for its efforts to help families to successfully reunite, get off the streets, and live independently. Genesis Home works to end homelessness for families with children by providing housing and supportive services to foster independence. The Housing Award recognizes an individual or organization for outstanding efforts in promoting fair housing with emphasis on the economic, social and/or political impact in the community that has encouraged diversity and housing opportunities for all.
- Vernondo Garcia-Carroll and Sary Lili Martinez both received Human Rights Youth Awards. Vernondo is a senior at Durham School for the Arts. Vernondo has consistently participated in Student U and Durham Art Guild Mentoring, as well as EPA Climate Control Certification Program, Environmental Science Summer Program at Duke University, MONS Mars Out Reach Program for North Carolina Students, Duke Robotics, Duke TIP Talent Identification Program, NC State Design Camp, and he is a bass player for DSA Jazz Band. Martinez is a participant in the Scholars to College Program at the Emily K Center. Martinez arrived in Durham seven years ago from Honduras, not speaking any English, and has since volunteered her time providing bilingual services on many occasions to connect and facilitate meetings between the families and the school system, as well as volunteering as a community advocate with the “Enlaces” program which serves Latino students in Durham Public Schools. The Human Rights Youth Award is presented to an individual or group of individuals under the age of 18 for demonstrating an understanding of, and commitment to, human relations in Durham.

For more information about this annual event, contact Human Relations Manager Delilah Donaldson with the City’s Neighborhood Improvement Services Department Human Relations Division at (919) 560-4107, ext. 34277 or by email at [Delilah.Donaldson@DurhamNC.gov](mailto:Delilah.Donaldson@DurhamNC.gov).

### **About the Human Relations Division in the City of Durham Neighborhood Improvement Services Department**

The Neighborhood Improvement Services Department works to preserve and improve quality of life conditions for Durham residents, and to encourage active participation in neighborhood

redevelopment and public policy and decision making dialogue. The department is responsible for enforcement of quality of life ordinances and state statutes including the City's Minimum Housing Code; Nonresidential Code; Weedy Lot, Abandoned and Junk Vehicle ordinances; and the State of North Carolina's Unsafe Building Statute. The department's Human Relations Division strives to improve race and human relations in the City by working to eliminate housing discrimination and by prioritizing community outreach and educational activities to meet the needs of Durham's residents. The Human Relations Division also provides oversight to the City of Durham Human Relations Commission, which is comprised of 15 Durham residents who meet monthly to work on activities designed to improve human relations and promote harmony throughout Durham. Guided by the City's Strategic Plan, the department helps ensure that Durham has thriving, livable neighborhoods by providing the highest quality of services to engage and educate the community, eradicate blight, ensure safer neighborhoods, and enhance neighborhood revitalization. For more information, visit <http://DurhamNC.gov/ich/cb/nis/Pages/Home.aspx>.

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