

News Release

For Immediate Release: April 22, 2019

Durham Announces Human Relations Advocacy Award Winners

April 23 Ceremony is Free and Residents are Encouraged to Attend

DURHAM, N.C. –The Human Relations Commission will recognize tomorrow four award winners who have distinguished themselves by contributing their time and talents to honoring the spirit of servant leadership in Durham.

In honor of National Fair Housing Month, the Human Relations Commission, and the Human Relations Division of the City of Durham Neighborhood Improvement Department are hosting the 2019 Human Relations Advocacy Awards on Tuesday, April 23 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Holton Career and Resource Center Auditorium, located at 401 N Driver St. This ceremony is free and open to the public.

This year's ceremony features keynote speaker Dr. Serena Sebring, regional organizing manager for Southerners On New Ground (SONG), which is a regional queer liberation organization made up of black people, people of color, immigrants, undocumented people, people with disabilities, working class and rural and small town LGBTQ people in the South. The evening will also include a performance by Alexandra Valladares and the Viajeros Melodiosos, a collective of musical talents drawing from the diversity of its band members' cultural backgrounds.

The following honorees will also be recognized during this ceremony:

- **Carlie B Sessoms Award:** will be presented to Helena Cragg and the [LGBTQ Center of Durham](#). This award is for an individual or organization that has made a major impact on improving human relations. This award commemorates the 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.
- **Fair Housing Advocacy Award:** will be presented to [The Herald Sun](#) for their project, "Story of My Street: Gentrification in Durham." This 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 which has encouraged diversity and housing opportunities for all.
- **Human Rights and Advocacy Awards:** will be presented to Judge Shamioka Rhinehart. This award recognizes a local, state or federal lawmaker who has successfully supported or promoted human rights causes and issues.
- **Norris Wicker Youth Human Rights and Advocacy Award:** will be presented to Jalen McKoy. This award is for an individual or group of individuals under the age of 18 for demonstrating an understanding of and commitment to the improvement and human relations. This award commemorates the contributions of the late Norris Wicker, a human relations commissioner, who lived a life dedicated to service, and empowering and supporting youth.

For more information about this year's ceremony, contact Human Relations Manager Phillip Jordan with the City's Neighborhood Improvement Services Department Human Relations Division at (919) 560-1647 ext. 34267 or by [email](#).

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

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's Human Relations Division strives to improve race and human relations by working to eliminate housing discrimination and by prioritizing community outreach and educational activities to meet the needs of Durham's residents. The division is responsible for enforcement of the City's Fair Housing Ordinance and the federal Fair Housing Act. HUD provides funding annually for the division to investigate housing complaints that allege discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex (gender), religion, national origin, physical or mental handicap or familial status (families with children). The division also provides oversight to the City's Human Relations Commission, which is comprised of residents who meet monthly to work on activities designed to improve human relations and promote harmony throughout Durham.

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