

## Fire Station Named After First Black Mayor of Huntington

The West Virginia Human Rights Commission (HRC) would like to congratulate their 2023 Civil Rights Award recipient Joseph Williams Jr. on having a fire station named in his honor. Local and federal officials along with members from HRC attended the opening ceremony of the Mayor Joseph L. Williams Fire Station on November 9, 2023, located on the corner of 9th Avenue and 20th Street in Huntington, celebrating the \$5.3 million investment in the city of Huntington.

Considered a champion fighter in the Fairfield community and a dedicated official in the city of Huntington, Joseph was the elected first black mayor of Huntington in 1984. He is also credited with the founding of the Ebony Golf Classic, which attracted golfers from around the United States and Canada. He was also chairman of First Sentry Bank and was president and CEO of Consolidated Bank and Trust in Richmond, VA, from which merged Premier Financial Bancorp Inc. He founded many organizations in the Fairfield area that have benefited stakeholders in his area. He is a member of the Marshall Board of Governors, where he was just elected into the Black Alumni Hall of Fame and served on the US Small Business National Advisory Council during President Bill Clinton's administration. Even though he has obtained much political and financial success, he has never left his community.



## Fair Housing Leadership: Building an Equitable Future

In honor of the 55th anniversary of the passage of the Federal Fair Housing Act, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) convened its Fair Housing initiatives Program (FHIP) and Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) partners for the first national FHEO in-person conference since 2018.

Being together in one place at one time presented HUD and its FHIP and FHAP fair housing partners a tremendous opportunity to reconnect as colleagues around the “why” of their work, to partner around solutions to achieve meaningful fair housing outcomes, and to align on new fair housing initiatives, practices, and policies for the benefit of the people we all serve.

The event was attended by HRC Executive Director Tia Welch and Housing Investigator Joseph Saunders, along with persons of note such as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Fair Housing Demetria McCain, Melody Taylor, author Leah Rothstein, and many more.

## HRC Receptionist Promoted to Investigator Associate

As of November 20, 2023, Owen Dean has been promoted to the position of Investigator Associate. Owen, who graduated from Elmira College in New York state and holds a Master’s Degree in Professional Writing, joined the HRC as a Receptionist in 2019.

## HRC Staff Train in Fire Safety



On November 17, 2023, during the Commission's monthly all-staff meeting, Safety Committee Chair Derek Thomas, with technical expertise provided by an officer from the Charleston Fire Department, performed a fire safety demonstration for all Commission staff. This demonstration provided hands-on experience regarding the proper use and techniques required to extinguish a fire. Additional information was also provided to staff in the form of differing fire types as well as the proper type of fire extinguisher to ensure

## Issues and Eggs

On January 10, 2024, the West Virginia Human Rights Commission attended and sponsored the annual Issues and Eggs Legislative Breakfast at the Embassy Suites in Charleston, WV.

The event is the forerunner of the second session of the 86th West Virginia Legislature bringing the community together to highlight the agenda for this session, which begins after the breakfast is concluded. The HRC anticipates this session's insight regarding their goals for the next sixty days, and will report further as more information becomes available.



## WVHRC Supports Toys For Tots Program 2023

In response to the community children's needs, HRC sponsored a Toys For Tots donation box in collaboration with the State Bar's Veteran and Military Affairs Committee. During the month of November employees purchased and donated new toys to provide children with Christmas gifts they otherwise may not have received. Thanks to the employees' generosity, children were greeted with gifts come Christmas



## Celebrating the Holidays



This year, HRC celebrated the holidays during the month of December with a Holiday Lounge, as well as letters to Santa, a number-guessing jar, childhood photos, shelving elves, and a tasty holiday lunch to complete celebrations. It was a great time to celebrate and share special moments.

## General Counsel Addresses Housing Authority

On November 28, 2023, Cameron McKinney, General Counsel of the HRC, gave an informative presentation to the Kanawha/Charleston Housing Authority on employment, public accommodations and housing, focusing specifically on harassment.

