

Alertness Attentiveness Availability Benevolence Boldness
 Cautiousness Compassion Contentment Creativity
 Decisiveness Deference Dependability Determination Diligence
 Discernment Discretion Endurance Enthusiasm
 Faith Flexibility Forgiveness Generosity Gentleness
 Gratefulness Honor Hospitality Humility
 Initiative Joyfulness Justice Loyalty Meekness
 Obedience Orderliness Patience Persuasiveness
 Punctuality Resourcefulness Responsibility Security Self-Control
 Sensitivity Sincerity Thoroughness Thriftiness



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 Security Self-Control Sensitivity Sincerity
 Thoroughness Thriftiness Tolerance Truthfulness
 Virtue Wisdom

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Heroes of Character

2021



October 21, 2021 | Virtually

MASTER OF CEREMONY

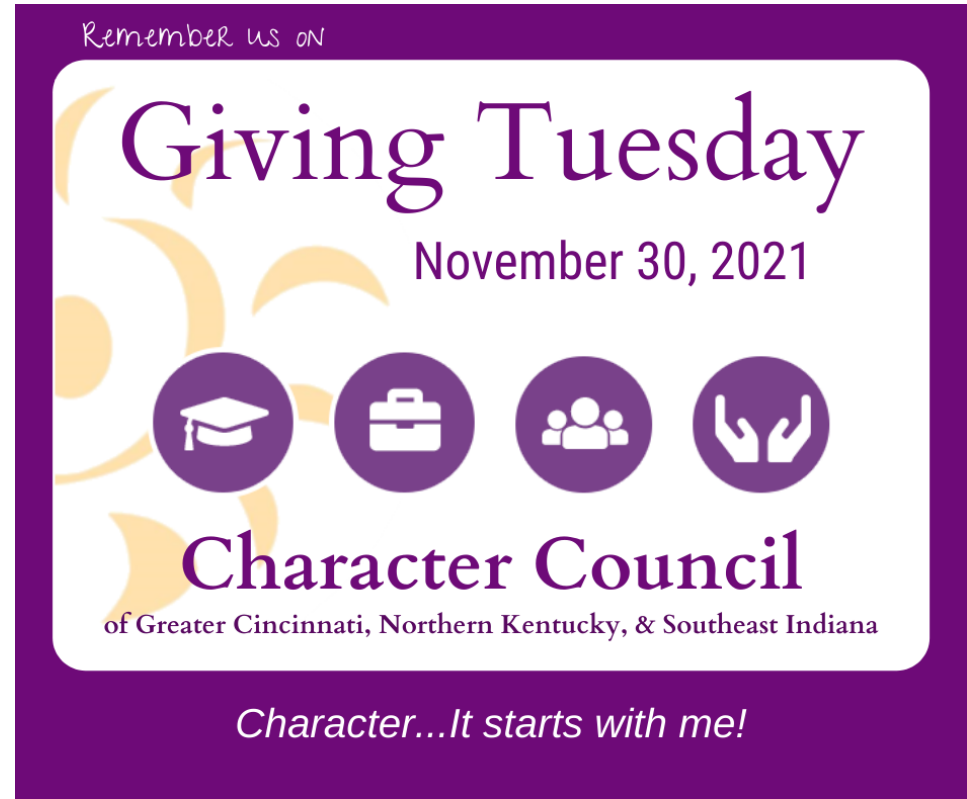
Tyler Bradshaw

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Bleuzette Marshall



Hamilton Caster Salutes all of the Heroes of Character and Student Heroes of Character!



Thank you for joining us this evening to honor this year's Heroes and Student Heroes of Character. We always look forward to this event every year for the inspiring reminder of the light in the world. Do you know someone who should be a Hero or Student Hero of Character next year? Nominate them! Nominations open Monday, October 25, 2021. I'll look forward to getting your nominations!

Best,

Jacqueline Schmucki
Jacqueline Schmucki
Executive Director

knowledge. In these situations, I have seen Luke thrive on working with his classmates and guiding them through this material as well. Luke is willing to work with any student in my classroom and encourages them to work harder, which embodies Acceptance of his peers and Responsibility for his learning and success. Luke asks tough questions and is never afraid to be himself. He accepts all people for who they are. Luke is Honest and Responsible and as a member of Wilson's Golf and Tennis Team, he always comes prepared and on time. He is Respectful to each of his teachers, administrators, and coaches. Luke has been recognized as one of Wilson's Student of the Month as he is Kind, Compassionate, and Caring to each person he meets. - *Nominated by Gaby Tagliamonte*

Jayden Wilson has pressed through her reading challenges and is succeeding because of her pure Determination and hard work. When she found out she was on the list for students who qualified to apply to the National Junior Honor Society, her response was a combination of shock, tears, and amazement. She knew she was working hard but didn't see herself with this kind of success. She had to produce a cohesive essay and fulfill the requirements of the NJHS application process. Jayden carefully walked through every step of the process. She was accepted into the NJHS, attended the Induction ceremony, and now Enthusiastically participates in their wonderful community projects. Jayden did not see herself in this light of achievement, and now she shines as an ambitious member. She accomplished this goal as a virtual student, using a rigorous academic platform. Virtual learning does not have in-class support and accountability. Virtual students need to stay focused, self-motivated, on pace with the learning system, and organized with the technology and Responsibilities. Jayden strived and surpassed all expectations, and she did this with a consistent underlying spirit of Respect in each challenge. - *Nominated by Gale Sarant*

Character...
It starts with me



Our Mission

To foster character development in children and adults as a foundation for success

Our Vision

To work with organizations in Greater Cincinnati to facilitate positive cultural change, contributing to a society in which:

- Individuals and families are strong
- Homes and streets are safe
- Education is effective
- Business is productive
- Citizens care for one another.

Character Pledge

I pledge... to practice the character quality of the month, to take the high road, the higher thought, the kinder word, and the best action in my daily life, to uphold what is true, right and just, to be a model of good character for those around me, to operate with honesty and integrity in my dealings with others, and to do my part to make Greater Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky, and Southeast Indiana a region where individuals and families are strong; homes and streets are safe; education is effective; business is productive; and citizens care for one another.

Character... It starts with me



The Hamilton City of Character Committee Congratulates

Joni Copas

Kathleen Klink

Luke Walker

Madison Payne

Jayden Wilson

On being named Heroes and Student Heroes of Character

addiction. This pilot program will be taught to students in a similar fashion as D.A.R.E. is taught to the fifth-grade in our communities. However, this program is student-led and continues where D.A.R.E. ends, when students are more likely to have circumstances arise that would lead them to more dangerous opportunities and peer pressure.

Ornella is a leader at Princeton High School, as the President of the National Honor Society. She became the co-host, alongside Superintendent Tom Burton, of our monthly television show, "Viking Voices: The People of Princeton." As co-host, Ornella helps select guest speakers and topics to showcase to our community. Ornella asks thoughtful questions to the guests and ensures that a high quality of professionalism is maintained. At the end of each episode, Ornella is featured in "Siakam Speaks" a segment where she performs original poetry covering current topics, such as the Coronavirus, racism, gun violence, and more.

Ornella is also one of four Princeton High School students who were part of the "Students for Equitable Education Summit". In conjunction with Digital Promise and school districts across the country, students led discussions on how educators can change what or how they are teaching to become more equitable. Ornella, one of the top student leaders, was asked to deliver a Keynote Address.

Ornella Siakam is a hero who uses her voice for those who feel underrepresented or unheard. She shares her talents and speaking skills to not only question issues, but to make changes. Her knowledge and research experience have led her to find ways to make our community and those who live in it better. Ornella Siakam is a true Hero of Character. —*Nominated by Tricia Roddy*

Luke Walker is a student that demonstrates each of the five traits that The Hamilton "City of Character" Coalition was founded on. Luke is a member of Wilson's Chapter of the National Junior Honor Society, which is also founded on five extremely similar pillars. To be a member of NJHS, students must demonstrate the highest levels of character, service, leadership, scholarship, and citizenship. Luke is a very high-level, strong inquiry-based, thinker. He thinks through challenging material very deeply and analyzes it using his prior

efforts in virtual learning. She has not wavered from staying positive and focused on enduring the challenges of her learning differences and the obstacle of learning virtually. Madison quickly learned how to navigate a new learning system, maintain her virtual meeting responsibilities, become an expert in prioritizing assignments and tasks, maintain dedication and motivation to have continued success in learning, and complete her seventh-grade year well. Madison maintains an organized workspace and keeps her at-home environment conducive to her learning goals. Last year, with fewer opportunities for collaboration and not having in-class accountability, she remained on pace and sometimes ahead of her peers who were without learning challenges. Madison used the frustrating system disruptions that come with online learning and the rigorous academic content in the program utilized by our school as an opportunity and demonstrated her enormous capacity to persevere. At the time of this application, Madison has a grade average of 90% in her core classes. Madison pursued her education with unwavering integrity, always demonstrating respect in every communication. Because of her choice to remain constantly engaged at the highest level, Madison has secured lifetime skills in time management, patience in difficult times, multiple technical skills, while demonstrating the qualities required of a Hero of Character. Madison will be able to look back at this difficult time in our Nation's history, with memories of her positive pursuits and accomplishments. —*Nominated by Gale Sarant*

Ornella Siakam has been a standout student where she has made quite a name for herself, as she represented Princeton High School in poetry slams across the region. For the past two years, Ornella has been involved in the Youth Built Change program, which is a partnership between Princeton City Schools and the University of Cincinnati. The program is part of a class that is focused on creating community researchers in STEM. As a high school junior, Ornella conducted research on drug abuse and addiction in urban Cincinnati. Over the year, she worked with a team to develop research questions, collect and analyze data, and present the findings to academic audiences and community stakeholders. Out of this research, Ornella and two other students created a “New ERA - a new and sustainable plan to ERadicate Addiction” program for middle and high school students to prevent drug and alcohol

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academic skills for eligible high school students interested in education beyond high school.

Dr. Partridge also has two Adjunct Assistant Professor positions with the University of Cincinnati College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services (CECH) and the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College. — *Nominated by Derrick Gentry*

Holly Simms is an advocate for children. She firmly believes that every child can succeed, and she shows that every day with laughter and love. Weekly, the students are rewarded for their safety protocol with music, treats, movies, or extra recess. She exhibits fun and loves each and every day with her students and her staff. Her mantra - "Living the Dream" - is shown through her zest for life and appreciation for others. Holly's Enthusiasm, Compassion, and Empathy have created a loving and fun atmosphere to work and learn. Holly can be found at every school event, supporting her staff, her students, and their families. Holly is also Generous with her time by being active in her community and in her church. — *Nominated by Pam Wray*

2020 Student Heroes of Character

Kraig Payne has been nominated as a student Hero because of all that he's had to endure during the last school year. Kraig is being raised by his Great Aunt, an elderly woman who wants the best in life for him. Kraig is a very Enthusiastic young man whose desire is to learn and always make the right choices. During last year's blended schedule, he never missed a class. On the days that he was at home, he still made sure that his work was completed. He always came to his teacher's office hours to make sure he was able to get all the extra help he needed. Whenever he would have a difficult time with assignments, he was so willing to try various strategies to find a solution.

Right before Christmas 2020, Kraig and his Great Aunt were evicted. Since then, they have been homeless. They were changing shelters daily. Along with this, his aunt had caught Covid-19. Despite this, Kraig was Responsible, Flexible and Determined and never missed a class online. He's Compassionate and very sensitive to others in need. He's a child who wants to give what little he has to someone who has less. — *Nominated by Lonia Lyle*

Madison Payne has an underlying trait of steadfastness woven into every aspect of her



2021 Finalists

Below are the Finalists for Hero of Character:

Tina Cole

Candace James

Christina Kent

Manga Tita

Tom Burton

working with the Pastor Shaq, Job and Mentoring Program for youth, and the Hamilton Community Foundation. She is always focused on the education of young people, which is a continuation of her 47-year career in public education as a teacher and superintendent of Lakota Local School District. She is Compassionate and Accepting of all citizens in Hamilton; she is known for her Honesty and Respect in dealing with others, and for her acknowledgment that we are Responsible to help each other in good times and bad. —*Nominated by Mayor Patrick Moeller*

Andrew Leurck is a one-of-a-kind character who has shined through all his challenges. Drew is autistic but has never let it slow him down in communicating his message that each of us is “Special” in our own way.

Through his Compassion, Courage, and Creativity he has affected thousands of people within his community with his art and message. “Drews Rainbows”, his nonprofit foundation, helps other people like him sell their art, and helps with awareness. The foundation is focused on special needs individuals and children who are developmentally delayed. His Creativity is in his art and the Rainbows that allow him to convey his message to all who know him. His Courage allows him to approach strangers of all types to communicate his message and his Compassion makes him want to help others.

His Determination and Enthusiasm, helped him travel the world spreading his small Rainbow Business Card reminding people they are special. Through it all, his natural Honesty and Humility in what he has done makes one even more likely to follow the amazing Character Example he has set. Drew has already affected many with his natural ability to share with others a message of hope and joy and belief in oneself. With the support of his amazing family, he has been a shining example of what anyone can achieve. —*Nominated by Dan Marshall*

Cynthia Partridge, Ph.D., is a person who is devoted to the development and elevation of children who have the hardest road to success. She demonstrates Compassion and Availability to those she mentors and she models Wisdom and a Positive attitude with those who are facing difficulties.

Dr. Partridge is currently employed by the University of Cincinnati Upward Bound Program. She has worked as the Associate Director of Upward Bound since January 1990. Upward Bound is a pre-college program administered by the U.S. Department of Education and the University of Cincinnati. It is designed to motivate and provide

2021 Heroes of Character

Andrew Leurck

Founder, Drew’s Rainbows

Ashley Gallahar

Teacher, Lighthouse Community School

Cynthia Partridge

Assoc. Director, University of Cincinnati Upward Bound

Holly Simms

Principal, Taylor Middle School

Ron Beshear

Financial Representative, Northwestern Mutual

Joni Copas

Retired Dir. Of Comm., Hamilton City School District

Kathleen Klink

Supporter of Hamilton Citizens

2021 Students of Character

Ornella Siakam

High School Senior

Kraig Payne

Fourth Grade

Luke Walker

Eighth Grade

Madison Payne

Seventh Grade

Jayden Wilson

Eighth Grade



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limit them to just a few. Lighthouse was a Charter School that accepted all children up to the age of 21. Many students had been kicked out of their home schools, had been in the criminal justice system, or had learning disabilities. Ashley wasn't there to just present material. She wanted her students to learn, and they did!

While discipline was a serious challenge in other classrooms, Ashley was in control. She was in control because of the relationship of Trust that she had built with her students. She was Compassionate but not a pushover. She clearly believed in their ability and challenged them to go beyond what they thought they were capable of. She accomplished this by ALWAYS being Positive and Enthusiastic. Her lessons weren't from a textbook but were units of Creativity where each student would find a way to shine. The degree of Patience and Determination that she constantly exhibited was unmatched!

Not only did Ashley spend hours creating meaningful assignments, but she also took her planning bells to work on special projects, choreograph and participate with students for a school talent show, and listen to them try to work through their problems. When it was time to plan for Homecoming, Prom, or Graduation, Ashley was the teacher who led the effort, planning the event and the decorations with the students and monitoring their progress so that each event was fun and special! When the school closed in March due to the pandemic, Ashley continued to encourage her students. She provided them with daily assignments and contacted each student daily to see how they and their families were doing. Unfortunately, most assignments went undone, but that didn't deter Ashley from trying.

Cincinnati Public bought Lighthouse and closed its' doors at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Ashley is currently touching lives as an Assistant Principal at Holmes High School. — *Nominated by Jan Robinson*

Kathleen Klink, a Former Hamilton City Council Member and former Hamilton Citizen of the Year, demonstrates Compassion in her role as a community leader and "go-to" organizer. Kathy was the main force in creating Hamilton's 17Strong effort to strengthen the city's 17 neighborhoods. 17Strong motivates citizens in their neighborhoods to improve their surroundings including enhancing neighborhood appearance; creating murals; building parks in neighborhoods that had no park; encouraging citizens to become leaders and creating a grant program for projects ranging from purchase of park benches to "Art in the Park" programs for children to neighborhood festivals and reunions. Kathy is a tireless volunteer including

basic necessities to those in need. The organization believes that Positive self-esteem enhances the educational process. Joni served as the organization's president and continues to serve as a liaison between the non-profit and the school district. The organization puts on an annual fundraiser, Witches Night Out, in which Joni assists with the planning, preparation, and volunteering. Since her retirement, Joni continues to support the organization.

Joni has been a life-long member of her church, Zion Lutheran Church, located in downtown Hamilton, where she volunteers on the Social Concerns Committee. Most recently, she is involved in many local organizations such as the One City, One Book committee, the Hamilton Character Council, the Hamilton Business Advisory Council, the Greater Hamilton Safety Council, the Healthy Hamilton Committee, and the Civics Day in which both public and private schools participate as the students learn more about local involvement. Those closest to Joni would describe her as a loving, and selfless person that values her family and her hometown. She is often putting others' needs before her own, including her family, friends, and community. Joni has the gift of caring about each person she meets. Leane Schisler, retired Fine Arts Department secretary with the Hamilton City School District, noted that: "The smartest thing that HCSD ever did was to hire Joni Copas. And I'm not the only one who has said so. I've enjoyed an absolutely wonderful working relationship with her through my years in the Fine Arts Department. I consider her one of my favorite friends."

Joni was recently the recipient of the YWCA's Outstanding Women of Achievement award. Joni is married to her husband, Dr. Joe Copas (a dentist in the Hamilton area) for over 35 years. They have raised three children in Hamilton, OH. Joni is the proud 'Nana' to two grandsons and a granddaughter. —*Nominated by Steve Lippert*

Ashley Gallahar, a Language Arts teacher at Lighthouse Community School, demonstrates daily so many examples of exceptional character that it is impossible to

Heroes of Character

Thursday, October 21, 2021, 7:00 PM: Live Virtual Presentation

via YouTube

Welcome from Emcee Tyler Bradshaw

Jacqueline Schmucki, Executive Director

Keynote Speech—Bleuzette Marshall, VP of Equity, Diversity, &

Inclusion at the University of Cincinnati

Break

Finalist Recognition

Student Heroes of Character Recognition

Heroes of Character Recognition

Character Pledge



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2021 Heroes of Character

Ron Beshear is known as the underground mayor in Cincinnati, Ohio— everybody knows him, everybody Respects him and most importantly, everybody Loves him.

Whether he's spending dubious amounts of time coaching, mentoring, and supporting the next wave of talented young professionals, volunteering in his community, or enjoying a Sunday with his wife at church, one aspect of Ron always stays consistent — he's tremendously present — something that's difficult to say in a world dominated by endless beeps, buzzes, and notifications.

And, when you take a look at Ron's mission, it's easy to see why he pours so much of himself into the people he comes into contact with on a daily basis — "Honor God with the time and talent that I've been given and use those two things in a balanced way to hopefully make a significant difference for my family, my friends, my community and my business associates."

Ron sponsored the Character Council in its early years with office space and has been a champion of the organization throughout its journey.

Additionally, Ron and his wife Mary helped found Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy, which enrolls approximately 1,500 students each year from preschool to grade 12. They have also both written books, including memoirs that aim to inspire others to look past their circumstances and to hope for the future. *-Nominated by Michael Daly*

Joni Copas began her career as the Director of Communications for the Hamilton City School District about 25 years ago. Throughout that time, Joni developed many meaningful relationships and connections throughout the community. Joni embraced that part of her job, not because she considers it to be a part of her job description, but because it is in her heart. Her leadership within her role grew, despite being the only employee in her department. She had taken on many involvements within the city, as well as within the county. Throughout her career, Joni developed a reputation as being a Compassionate, Honest colleague that has earned her much Respect within all of her engagements.

Joni served on The Caring Closet's board since its conception as one of the founding members. The Caring Closet is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of all children in the Hamilton City School District by providing clothing and