The Eternal Village

TEEN EMPOWERMENT

2022 Annual Community Luncheon

powered by

BANK OF AMERICA

Thursday, June 9, 2022
(Rain date: June 10)
11am arrival, 12pm program start

Parcel 5, 285 E. Main Street
FEARLESS IS KNOWING THERE ARE NO LIMITS

For over 85 years, we’ve called the Rochester area home. And we’ve been here to care for the local community. Not only providing high-quality, low-cost health insurance, but resources to make Upstate New York a better place to live, work and raise a family.

That’s why we are proud to support Common Ground Health.

Learn more about our community investments and partnerships at ExcellusBCBS.com/Community
Opening Performance
Teen Empowerment Youth Organizers

Welcome
Ajamu & Ahlia Kitwana, Event Hosts

Invocation
JD Brown, Rock Hope Fellowship

Interactive Wave
Je’Carl Hill and J’La Jones, TE Program Coordinators

TE Update
Doug Ackley, Rochester Director and Shanterra Mitchum, Rochester Program Director

Special Recognition Sankofa Award: Dr. David Anderson
Presented by Jaylen Wims, Youth History Ambassador
Tyzere Holland, former Youth Organizer

Peacemaker in Action Award: Anthony Hall
Presented by Isaiah Santiago, Youth Leader

Champion for Youth Leadership Award: Simeon Banister
Presented by Shawniah Ruth and Heaven Vega, Youth Organizers

Closing
James Kegler and Marcus Cooper, Program Coordinators

Music by the TE Tones featuring former Youth Organizer Justice Freeman
Congratulations to
Simeon Banister,
Anthony Hall,
and Dr. David Anderson!

Teen Empowerment
making a needed difference in Rochester
DR. DAVID ANDERSON

Dr. David Anderson was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio. He served six years in the Air Force during the Korean War, where his task of processing film eventually led him to Rochester Institute of Technology. After encountering RIT staff who were unwilling to help him find housing when he arrived as a freshman, a woman who worked there cleaning referred him to Mrs. Morris’ rooming house in the Third Ward near downtown (where RIT was located at the time). David lived and worked in the predominantly African American community while completing his bachelors from 1956 - 1960. He fell in love with the Clarissa Street ethic where people built their own businesses and hired their neighbors to give each other a leg up.

As a young man, David was inspired by lunch counter sit-in’s in the South to join others to picket Woolworth’s in downtown Rochester, where employees were hostile toward Black customers.

David developed and ran youth programming for Action for a Better Community and the Urban League—including youth jobs—and worked with parents at Rochester City School District. In 1975, he earned a Ph.D. in Educational Administration from The Union Institute & University. Throughout, dignity and heritage became defining themes that would drive Dr. Anderson’s life and contributions to our community and well beyond.

Dr. Anderson, known to many as Mr. Sankofa, lives the traditional symbol he wears on a pendant around his neck. Sankofa (pronounced Sahn-KOH-fah) is a word in the Twi language meaning “to retrieve.” The Sankofa bird appears frequently in the art of the Akan people of Ghana. It is usually represented with the bird’s head turned looking backwards while its body faces forward symbolizing: In order to know where we’re going, we need to fetch the lessons from where we’ve been.

Dr. Anderson is co-founder of the Blackstorytelling League and Akwaaba Heritage Associates, sharing African American lore in 25 U.S. states and Ghana. For more than 20 years he’s crafted living history reenactments that recall the experiences of African American Union soldiers and Frederick Douglass’ life as a freedom fighter based in Rochester. He gives students and others tours of Rochester’s Black history and is author of several books, including an award-winning children’s book, The Origin of Life on Earth: an African Creation Myth (1992).

Annually, for more than 25 years, he has convened local Kwanzaa celebrations. He is chief organizer of Rochester’s annual tribute to the 16 Black Civil War soldiers known to be buried in municipal cemeteries. In 2018, David was appointed to the federal commission established to honor the 200th anniversary of Douglass’ birth. Dr. Anderson is Visiting Community Scholar at Nazareth College, where he has contributed to creating the Center for Public History.

TE has participated for years in programming led by Dr. Anderson. Most moving was the annual Maafa ritual at Lake Ontario where the community honors those lost to the Middle Passage, where thousands of kidnapped Africans who died on slave-trading ships crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Dr. Anderson has collected soil and sand from every location around the world where he has traveled and invited participants to sprinkle this earth, along with flowers, into the water as a unifying tribute to this collective trauma and loss.

In 2019, Dr. Anderson and his wife, Ruth, took TE Youth History Ambassadors on their Akwaaba Heritage Tour, including live actors playing Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and himself as Frederick Douglass. He appears in our documentary, Clarissa Uprooted: Youth & Elders Uncover the Story of Black Rochester. The documentary evolved into an exhibit that is on view until July 24, 2022.
“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

NELSON MANDELA
Anthony is a dedicated family man, community leader, advocate, and humble hero. Raised by his grandmother, Delaine Cook-Green (aka Mother Cook-Green), Anthony grew up on the Northeast side of Rochester in the F.I.G.H.T. Village housing projects. There Anthony first learned the importance of community from through his grandmother’s example as a staunch trailblazer for her most vulnerable neighbors. She inspired Anthony to start B.O.O.K.B.A.G.S. Express, which stands for: Bring a community together, Overcoming hardship, Opportunity to give, Keeping the community clean, Believe, A brighter future, God, Success. Since 2009, B.O.O.K.B.A.G.S. Express has given away more than 20,000 stuffed bookbags, awarded 20 $500 scholarships, and hosted food drives and teach-ins that raise awareness on community issues.

Through this work, Anthony saw the magnitude of Rochester’s challenges, particularly with youth. He was moved to become a Youth Intervention Gang Specialist for Pathways to Peace. His work focuses on overcoming the cycle of violence and incarceration through love in the form of communication, education, mediation and de-escalation. For seven years, Anthony helped build a safer city for Rochester’s young people, promoting love and justice during times of civil unrest.

Feeling called to expand his service, Anthony left Pathways to Peace to take an opportunity in the K-12 education system as a dean at Vertus High School. As dean, he had a closer view into the lives of his students, leading him to run for an at-large elected seat on Rochester's City Council. He pursued a seat on City Council because he knew it would take collective action of government and community members to move the needle against any of Rochester’s challenges.

Anthony has returned as director of the City of Rochester’s Pathways to Peace program, where he leads efforts to feed homeless youth, relocate families, and provide jobs and sustainable opportunities for Rochester residents. Anthony also coaches Baden Street Bulldogs and Rochester Dolphins football teams and Baden Street Knights basketball.

TE staff first met “Booch” during his original run with Pathways over a decade ago. When youth have gotten caught up in conflicts or felt backed into a corner, we’ve worked together to remind them of their own agency and choices, while connecting them with supportive resources. At the same time, we’ve confronted systems and policies that hold back Black and Brown youth.

Anthony’s voice has been a clarion call in times of deep pain and need for collective action in our community. He’s reached out to elders for advice and stepped into gaps. He’s spoken unsettling truths. He’s provided conflict de-escalation training to community members and advocates—all with no budget. He coordinated community groups to be present during school let-outs for connecting and keeping young people safe.

Anthony builds relationships and listens to young people, working to pour in love, empathy, and the wake-up they need, helping them see another path—away from retaliation and toward community and healing. Anthony steps forward to systems to hold up a mirror. When children were handcuffed and pepper sprayed by police, Anthony showed up. When young people have hurt each other, Anthony shows up.

As a single father, Anthony understands the sacrifice and commitment it takes to uplift Rochester’s youth and families. Anthony believes that only a coalition of leaders from across all of Rochester will be able to break down the barriers of confusion, misunderstanding, fear, and hate that keeps many paralyzed in the grasp of the status quo. He hopes that the community as a whole will work together to fulfill its fullest potential.

“Please don’t thank me, we are in this together.”- Anthony L. Hall
Congratulations!

We are so proud of our colleague, Simeon Banister, for being named Teen Empowerment’s 2022 Champion for Youth Leadership.

Common Ground Health supports youth leaders making real changes in their communities.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Maya Angelou

Thank you, Teen Empowerment, for strengthening our community.
**CHAMPION FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP:**

**SIMEON BANISTER**

Simeon Banister was born and raised in Rochester. When he was 9 years old, he drove with his mom by Sibley’s downtown and wondered out loud, “why don’t any of the mannequins look like me?” Mother Iris told him he should write to the store. The next time he drove by, the mannequins had changed. That’s how Simeon learned that we can take action to make real change.

Simeon’s father, Thomas Banister, nourished him with stories that grounded him in community and gave him context for how and why Rochester developed. They spent lots of time reminiscing about life in the old Third Ward and faithfully attended annual Clarissa Street Reunions. From the Great Migration that brought his family from South Carolina, to the progress made by Black people in Rochester, to the constant chipping away at that progress by racist policies–Simeon learned that, in order to sustainably solve problems we face, we need to address the specific causes that led us here.

As a teen, Simeon was senior representative to the Rochester City School District (RCSD) school board and served on Mayor Johnson’s youth council. He later got his bachelor’s in Political Science at North Carolina Central University. While studying for a master’s in theology at Princeton, Simeon had time to reflect on how we fit into the fabric of our community and how can contribute. While seeking to develop common ground within politics and government in NYC helped him develop his understanding of how systems work. He brings all of this into his lifelong mission to engage youth and people most impacted by oppressive systems to become agents in their own liberation and community uplift.

At Rochester Area Community Foundation, Simeon is the transitional executive vice president, and will assume the position of president and CEO in October. Previously, as vice president of Community Programs, he co-led the transition to the Foundation’s equity mission. He served as a member of the Rush-Henrietta Board of Education. Currently he is president of the Greater Rochester Martin Luther King Jr. Commission and serves on the boards of the University of Rochester Medical Center, the Congressional Award Foundation, The Children’s Agenda, and the Genesee Land Trust. He has worked for the NYS Senate, the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance, the State University of New York, and several private commercial real estate firms.

TE welcomed Simeon onto the Community Task Force on School Climate through which youth, parents, educators and other partners successfully transformed the RCSD Code of Conduct from a punitive to a restorative tool for student growth and school safety. After 5 years, data showed significant increases in student success.

Simeon was also on the ground floor of TE’s Clarissa Uprooted initiative. Every year, Simeon eagerly sits in with TE youth organizer and youth history ambassador groups, as well as any venue where youth are, to tell them the story of their own neighborhoods—the stories his father shared with him, now married with the data and systems evidence that Simeon has added.

Simeon’s dynamic and loving family—wife Akilah and children, Julian and Olivia—recently relocated from Henrietta to the home they have refurbished in the South Wedge, just across the river from where his ancestors originally settled in Rochester.
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Rick and Marcy DeJesus-Rueff wish the Teen Empowerment staff and youth organizers continued success in their great work promoting peace and justice!
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live healthier, better lives through food.
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enriching our neighborhoods in every way
we can. We believe communities thrive when
we all work together.

The Center For Teen Empowerment

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Jazz artists played, families
sought their American
Dream, and people looked
out for one another.

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Street teaches all of us about
the past and ourselves today.

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ClarissaUprooted.org

Teen Empowerment & Clarissa Street Reunion Committee present

CLARISSA UPROOTED

THE EXHIBIT

Unearthing Stories of Our Village
(1940s - early 1970s)

JUNE 3 - JULY 24, 2022

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Thank you for investing in tomorrow’s leaders

Bank of America is proud to support Teen Empowerment for showing our young people that hard work, teamwork and reaching for excellence can lead to a bright tomorrow.

You’re an inspiration to our future leaders and to us all.

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