
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

August 27, 2013

Ald. Robert J. Bauman
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Harpoles to receive 2013 Frank P. Zeidler Public Service Award

Reuben and Mildred Harpole, longtime and highly-esteemed change agents for good in the City of Milwaukee, have been unanimously selected by the Frank P. Zeidler Public Service Award committee as the 2013 recipients of the award, which honors the life and work of former Milwaukee Mayor Frank Zeidler.

Reuben and Mildred Harpole will be honored in the third floor Common Council Chamber anteroom on Wednesday, September 4 at 8:30 a.m., and prior to the start of the regular Common Council meeting at 9 a.m. (in the Council Chamber) at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St. Media coverage is invited.

Since their marriage in 1959, the Harpoles have served as mentors, role models and advocates for those looking to get ahead and prosper, particularly young African-Americans. They have been tireless advocates for the City of Milwaukee, deeply committed to supporting the work of nonprofits with their time and energy, and the couple has embraced the concept of community service with a special drive and humility.

Mildred Harpole's more than four decades of service to the City of Milwaukee has yielded opportunities for growth and improvement for many citizens in need. Her board memberships have included the Milwaukee County Cultural Artistic & Musical Programming Advisory Council, the City of Milwaukee Arts Board, Community Brainstorming Conference, Family Service of Milwaukee and TEMPO. In her past position as Fair Housing Director for the state office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, she personally mentored the leaders of neighborhood-based organizations who worked to address the city's homelessness issues.

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2013 Zeidler Public Service Award/ADD ONE

Mildred Harpole is the founder and co-president of the North Central Service Club, The Links, Inc. – Cream City Chapter, a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and was the first president of Eta Phi Beta Sorority.

Like his wife, Reuben Harpole has been a champion of public service in the City of Milwaukee and has held numerous community-focused positions during his long career. Twenty years ago, he worked with UW-Milwaukee as an outreach specialist and assisted in the creation of an urban research center that helped improve educational opportunities for black students. Also at UWM, Reuben was responsible for creating the Volunteer Reading Program in the reading clinic. Because of his work, including helping facilitate talks between rival gangs and assisting numerous non-profits in getting their start, the Helen Bader Foundation hired Reuben as a program officer in 1998. In this position, Reuben oversaw the awarding of 758 grants totaling more than \$6.4 million.

Reuben Harpole, nicknamed “the mayor,” “the source” and the “connector” for his ability to bring people together and find resources for those in need, has embraced his role as a community activist, educator and general facilitator. Reuben, who is a recipient of countless honors and awards, has a city street named in his honor. He has helped create, or develop, nearly every important institution in Milwaukee’s African-American community, including: America’s Black Holocaust Museum; Harambee Community School; the Community Brainstorming Conference; College Prep Programs at Marquette University High School and Campion High School; NTU African Rites of Passage Program and many others.

Reuben once said, “People always asked why I was always helping people out all the time,” he said. “The answer was always the same. Because when you help other people, you are really helping yourself.”

Reuben and Mildred Harpole are commended for their lifetime of service to the City of Milwaukee and are recognized among Milwaukee’s strongest volunteers.

Chaired by civil rights attorney and activist Arthur Heitzer, the selection committee is composed of Alderman Bauman (vice chair), Milwaukee historian and writer John Gurda, Shelley Bruehling of the Frank P. Zeidler Center for Public Discussion, and community member Jack Murtaugh (a previous recipient of the Zeidler award).

Mr. Heitzer said the selection committee focused on the Harpoles’ decades of service and community-building action work.

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2013 Zeidler Public Service Award/ADD TWO

“They are both pioneers and important current advocates for positive social development, empowering all elements of our community, especially with knowledge and appreciation of often ignored African-American achievements,” Mr. Heitzer said. “They have worked tirelessly to build unity among city residents, and our community would not be the same without them.”

The award acknowledges residents whose efforts most embody the values and vision of former Mayor Zeidler. Elected public officials are not eligible to receive the honor.

Frank Zeidler, the city’s last socialist mayor, died July 7, 2006 at age 93. He served as mayor from 1948 to 1960, and continued to be a voice for social justice and public service until his death.

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