

May 2, 2025

North Jersey Community Development Youth Center 52 Front Street Paterson, NJ 07522

Hosted By:













Dear Friends and Supporters,

On behalf of **Growing In Grace Counseling Group**, **Willie Peterkin Foundation**, **PIFFY Award Organization**, **Casey Melvin**, **and The Roshawn Davis Foundation**, we extend our heartfelt thanks and deepest appreciation to everyone who made A Night of Color & Tribute: Celebrating Our Educators' Unsung Heroes such a meaningful and unforgettable event.

Your support, presence, and encouragement helped us honor the remarkable educators who are truly making a difference—in our classrooms, in the lives of Paterson families, and in the community as a whole. These unsung heroes go above and beyond each day, inspiring minds, nurturing growth, and building bridges of opportunity for future generations.

Thanks to your generosity, the evening was filled with joy, creativity, fellowship, and celebration—a beautiful tribute to those whose impact often goes unrecognized.

We are honored to stand alongside such a powerful and compassionate community of changemakers, advocates, and champions for education. Your contributions uplift our mission and help us shine a light on the educators who continue to shape a brighter tomorrow.

From the bottom of our hearts—thank you for being a part of this special night and for supporting the heroes who make lasting change every day.

With deep appreciation,













# **Kevonte Bryant Educator Making A Difference Award**

Kevonté T. Bryant, born and raised in Leland, NC, is a dedicated elementary school teacher at Paterson Charter School for Science & Technology (PCSST). Throughout his career, he has played a pivotal role in fostering academic excellence and supporting both students and educators. As a Grade Chair and Tutoring Coordinator, he is committed to differentiated instruction, stakeholder engagement, and program development. Kevonté has worked tirelessly to create inclusive and dynamic learning environments that inspire growth and achievement across multiple grade levels. His passion for student success extends beyond the classroom, leading to impactful initiatives such as crosscurricular virtual field trips, school-wide programs, pen pal exchanges, and free social-emotional learning experiences. His expertise in standards-based lesson planning, data-driven instruction, and interactive learning strategies has transformed classrooms, empowering young learners to reach their full potential.

A passionate leader beyond the classroom, Kevonté has been recognized for his outstanding contributions to education, earning the PCSST Rookie of the Year Award (2021), the New Jersey Public Charter School Association Excellent Educator Award (2022), and the PCSST M.V.P. Award (2023). He holds degrees from Cape Fear Community College and William Paterson University, where he graduated summa cum laude and was honored for his leadership and academic excellence. He furthered his studies through the Rutgers University Alternate Route Program, earning his K-6 teaching certification. Committed to lifelong learning and mentorship, Kevonté aspires to pursue graduate studies in educational leadership, ultimately reaching the doctoral level. His ability to build strong relationships with students, parents, and colleagues underscores his mission to create an educational culture where all students thrive—one that will one day extend to preparing students for academia and research, entrepreneurship, and lifelong financial security. Kevonté's professional passion and dedication are rooted in the belief that education should be accessible and personal for all so success, no matter how it looks, can be lifelong and fulfilling.

### **Favorite Quote:**

"Always connect a feeling and/or reason to everything you do, and let it take you as far as it can".



# Wanda Royster Educators Making A Difference Award

Wanda Royster was born and raised in Paterson City by her loving, supportive family. She attended elementary school at Paterson Public School #10. She graduated high school from Passaic County Technical Institute (class of 1984). She received a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree in Pharmacy from St John's University, Jamaica Queens, NY (class of 1989). She practiced community and hospital pharmacy collectively for 14 years. Led by her faith and trust in God, she answered the calling to become a public school teacher. Mrs. Royster has been teaching middle school science at Dr Martin Luther King Jr Educational Complex for the past 19 years. Colleagues and students describe her as a loving, caring, kind, compassionate teacher. She currently serves as an 8th grade advisor, planning, preparing and organizing school activities and events. She is passionate about educating, mentoring and inspiring the next generation of science innovators. She successfully guides students in fun, engaging educational experimentations which have led to 1st, 2nd, 3rd place, and honorable mention winnings at Paterson's district Science Expos.

Mrs. Royster considers herself a lifelong learner. She received a Master of Arts (MA) degree in Educational Leadership from Montclair State University (class of 2023). She is a member of the Alpha Epsilon Lambda Honor Society, having graduated amongst the top 20th percentile of the university's graduate degree program. Mrs Royster received science professional development training through the U.S. government agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), securing a spot to gain a remarkable continuing education experience at the National Weather Service, Kansas City, Missouri. She studied oceans, atmosphere and coastlines to educate students about the significance of protecting life and property. She acquired specialized training in STEM at the Meadowlands Environment Center, Lyndhurst, NJ to teach students about urban ecosystems. She obtained recognition for completing training as a DataStreme Earth's Climate System Education Resource Teacher, through the American Meteorological Society (AMS), an organization committed to advancing climate science. A highlight of her career was receiving the "2014 New Jersey Governor's Teacher of the Year" award. The excitement in knowing that her students can achieve, keeps her motivated to endure the joys and challenges teaching brings. Mrs Royster recognizes each child's greatest assets, while helping to nurture and shape their lives. She proclaims the words of the late world-renowned poet Maya Angelou that "When you learn, teach. When you get, give." She can attest to the belief that "Each child belongs to all of us and they will bring us a tomorrow in direct relation to the responsibility we have shown to them."

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6 KJV)



### Vanessa Serrano Educators Making A Difference Award

I am an educator with over 25 years of heartfelt dedication to empowering students, uplifting fellow educators, and building a thriving, inclusive school community. Currently, I have the tremendous honor of serving as the Principal of the AMAZING School 2, where I am deeply committed to fostering a culture of excellence, equity, and empathy. My mission is to ensure every child who walks through our doors feels valued, inspired, and equipped to reach their fullest potential.

My journey in education has been one of passion, perseverance, and purpose. I began my career as a permanent substitute teacher within Paterson Public Schools—and from day one, I knew this work was my calling. Through years of dedication and a relentless belief in the power of education, I advanced through various roles including classroom teacher, supervisor, vice principal, and now, proud principal. Every step of the way has shaped my leadership style—one that is student-centered, collaborative, and rooted in high expectations for both academic achievement and personal growth.

What fuels me most is the belief that education is transformational. I strive to create a school culture where students are challenged and supported, where teachers feel seen and empowered, and where families are valued partners in the learning journey. I'm not just building strong students—I'm helping to shape strong future leaders, critical thinkers, and compassionate citizens.

Beyond the walls of school, my most important role is that of a present and intentional parent. Supporting my children in their academic journeys, personal growth, and sense of self is one of my greatest joys. Our home is a place of learning, laughter, love, and honest conversations. Whether I'm helping with homework, cheering from the sidelines, or navigating tough talks, I believe in raising children who are kind, courageous, and curious. I want them to know that their voices matter, their dreams are valid, and that learning doesn't stop when the school bell rings.

Being a working parent and a school leader has taught me the value of balance, grace, and authenticity. I aim to model resilience, leadership, and joy—not just for my children, but for the students, staff, and families I serve every day. Some of my favorite moments are those spent reading with my kids, diving into their passions, and watching them discover the world with wide eyes and open hearts. These moments are the heartbeat of my "why."

I truly believe that education is not just a career—it's a calling, a movement, and a lifelong commitment to leaving the world better than we found it. I am incredibly proud to be part of this journey and look forward to continuing to inspire, serve, and lead with love.Bottom of Form

#### **Favorite quotes:**

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." — William Butler Yeats

"Educational success should be measured by how strong your desire is to keep learning"



## Rosa Valdez Educator Making A Difference Award

My name is Rosa Valdez, and I am honored to share a little about my journey as an educator. I earned my B.A. in Special Education and Psychology from New Jersey City University, and later continued my professional development by attending graduate courses at Concordia University. Since 1997, I have dedicated my life to teaching Special Education, and I am currently proud to serve as a teacher of students with autism at School #20 in Paterson, New Jersey.

With nearly three decades of experience, I remain deeply passionate about creating inclusive, nurturing, and empowering learning environments where every student—regardless of ability—can thrive and grow. Over the years, I have developed a strong skill set in designing and implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), adapting curricula, and using evidence-based strategies that meet each child's unique needs.

Collaboration is at the heart of what I do—I work closely with families, fellow educators, and specialists to ensure our students receive the care, support, and encouragement they need to succeed both academically and emotionally.

Outside the classroom, I cherish time with my amazing daughter, Julia, as well as our beloved pets—two cats and a loyal dog who bring so much joy to our lives. I'm a proud animal lover and advocate, and I care for a local colony of cats in Jersey City, a cause that's close to my heart. I also love connecting with friends over coffee, enjoying delicious meals with my family, and making the most of life's simple pleasures.

Being an educator is not just my profession—it's my calling. I'm deeply grateful for every student who has been a part of my journey, and I look forward to continuing to inspire and be inspired for many years to come.



### Jennifer Stone Educators Making A Differene Award

Ms. Stone is a dedicated and accomplished educator with over 24 years of experience, currently serving as a 4th-grade self-contained COG Mild teacher at Norman S. Weir School in Paterson, New Jersey. Throughout her distinguished career, she has remained steadfast in her commitment to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and academically enriching environment where all students—regardless of their individual challenges—can thrive.

Specializing in meeting the diverse needs of learners, Ms. Stone expertly develops and implements tailored instructional strategies that cater to a wide range of abilities and learning styles. Her classroom is a place of growth, encouragement, and discovery, where students are empowered not only to master academic content but also to develop self-confidence, resilience, and a love for learning.

Ms. Stone is deeply committed to the philosophy that education is most effective when it is collaborative. She actively cultivates strong partnerships with families, counselors, and fellow educators to ensure every child receives the comprehensive support they need to succeed. Her compassionate nature, combined with her expertise, allows her to connect with her students on a profound level—motivating and inspiring them to reach their full potential.

Outside of the classroom, Ms. Stone brings the same passion and determination to her personal life. She enjoys staying active through sports such as basketball, volleyball, and softball, and cherishes quality time spent outdoors with her family and two beloved dogs. Her multifaceted life serves as a model of balance, vitality, and purpose for her students and peers alike.

Ms. Stone is guided by a powerful personal philosophy:

"Life can be hard sometimes—always look for a reason to be positive, and be the reason someone smiles."



## Joanne Rivtello Educators Making A Difference Award

JoAnne Riviello is a lifelong resident of the city of Paterson. She received her formal education at St Mary's Elementary School and attended John F. Kennedy High School. Upon graduation her plan was to major in Mathematics and Science in college and go to medical school. She concentrated her college electives in education courses. After earning her BS in Math with minors in Biology, Chemistry and Education, she made the decision to teach for a year while studying for the MCATs.

While each of the districts she applied to for teaching positions offered her a job, she elected to return to her alma mater and began her career as a Math Teacher at Kennedy High School. During that first year, she realized that her passion was teaching the students she served. JoAnne taught every math course offered during her 17 years at JFK. During this time, she also earned two Master's Degrees, one in Mathematics and the other in Educational Leadership and School Administration.

In 1997, she transitioned to the position of Math Supervisor and was responsible for supporting the mathematics programs at 16 elementary schools. Although she found this position rewarding, she missed the daily interaction with students. This led to her interviewing and obtaining the position as Principal of School 24/New Roberto Clemente. After serving as principal for ten years, Mrs. Riviello, became the Asst. Superintendent of Schools, overseeing sixteen elementary schools. After six years in this position, she again realized that her true passion is working closely with students. She transitioned to School 21 as principal. After serving there for eight years, she was transferred to her home as principal of John F. Kennedy High School.

Mrs. Riviello, is a proud John F. Kennedy Knight and lives by the belief "Once a Knight, Always Knight". She works tirelessly to ensure the academic success of her students while supporting the 255 teachers she supervises.

Mrs. Riviello is currently completing her 49 + years with the Paterson Public School District. She was happily married to her husband Glynn for 37 years. Her proudest accomplishment is being the mother of her daughter Louvenia Fairfax who followed in her footsteps and serves the Paterson Public School District as a Special Education Teacher at STARS Academy.

"Educational success should be measured by how strong your desire is to keep learning"







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Wanda Royster

Celebrating Wanda Royster
Recipient of the Make A Difference
Educator Award

With grace, wisdom, and unwavering dedication, you have touched countless lives and inspired generations.

Your passion for teaching, your love for your students, and your commitment to excellence make you a true unsung hero.

"She speaks wise words and teaches others to be kind." - Proverbs 31:26 (NLV)

Congratulations, Wanda, You continue to make a difference in ways words can't fully capture. With all our love and admiration, your journey has inspired so many, through your unwavering dedication, you've planted seeds of greatness in every life you've touched. That is Wanda Royster lasting legacy. Your family and friends are so proud of you. We celebrate you today and always.

We Thank you,

Loving husband, family and friends.



#### Dear Wanda,

Words can't express how incredibly proud and thrilled I am to hear you've received the Educators Making a Difference Award!

This is such a well-deserved honour, and I was absolutely bursting with joy when I heard the news. Knowing you as I do and for long as I have, I've seen firsthand the passion, dedication, and unwavering commitment you pour into your work every single day.

You don't just teach; you inspire, you nurture, and you truly make a difference in the lives of your students. This award is a testament to the countless hours, the boundless energy, and the genuine love you have for education. It's a recognition of the impact you've made, and the bright future you're helping to build, one student at a time.

Congratulations, my friend. You are an exceptional educator, and an even more exceptional mother, daughter and sister.

Celebrate this incredible achievement – you've earned every bit of it!

With love and admiration, your bestie!

Lisa Reid

### Congratulations Wanda on receiving the Educators Making a Difference Award

"So, let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time, we will reap a harvest of blessings if we don't give up." Galatians 6:9

We share this verse as a reminder of your perseverance. Wanda, you have not given up. Because of your tireless dedication you can experience the fulfillment of seeing student growth and success.

Thank you for all you do and the difference you make in the lives of so many. You are an unsung hero, and our Lord & Savior has seen fit to publicly acknowledge your quiet devotion to Him, your family, your peers, and your students. We are so very proud of you!

Your Brother & Gister Pastor Kendrick & Lady Carla Durant

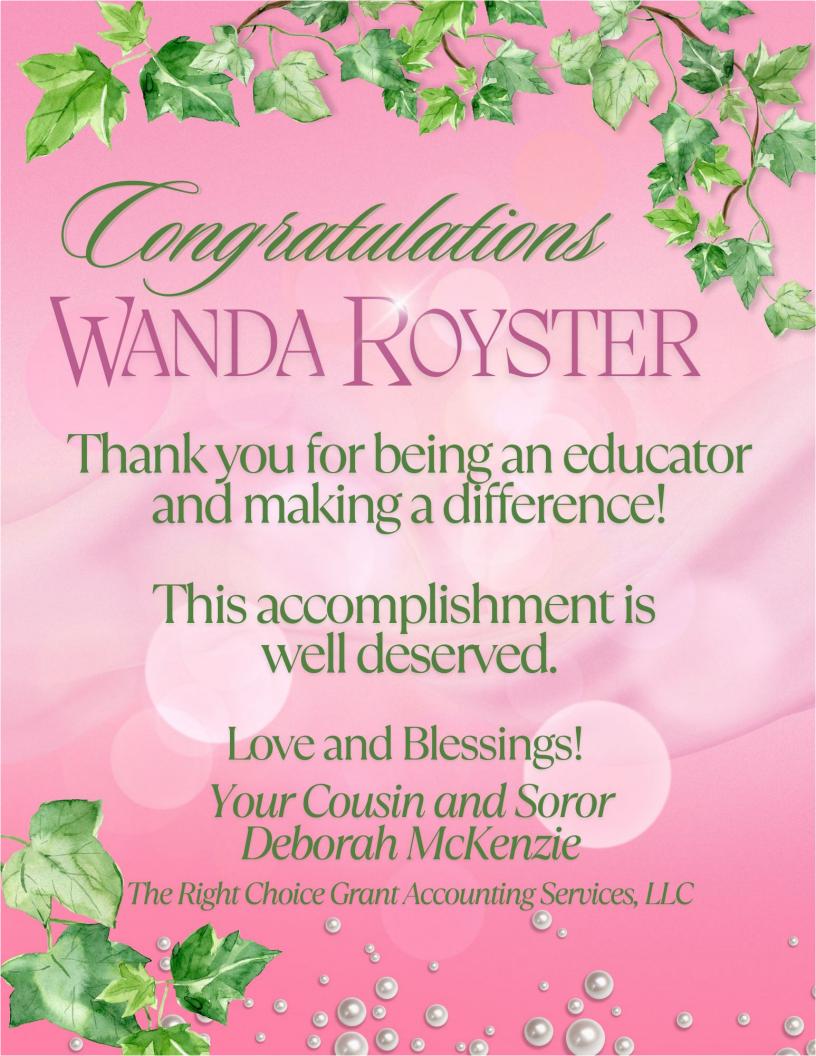
# Congratulations to an Extraordinary Educator! My Phenomenal Sister & Fierce Friend Wanda Royster Recipient of an Educator Making A Difference Award

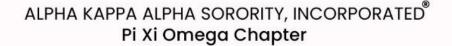


So proud of you as you are being celebrated for your unwavering dedication, tireless passion, and the countless lives you've touched through your work. Your commitment to making a difference doesn't go unnoticed. Your light shines brightly in every life, every classroom, every lesson, and every student you've inspired. Thank you for being the difference.

With admiration and pride,

Love Kim

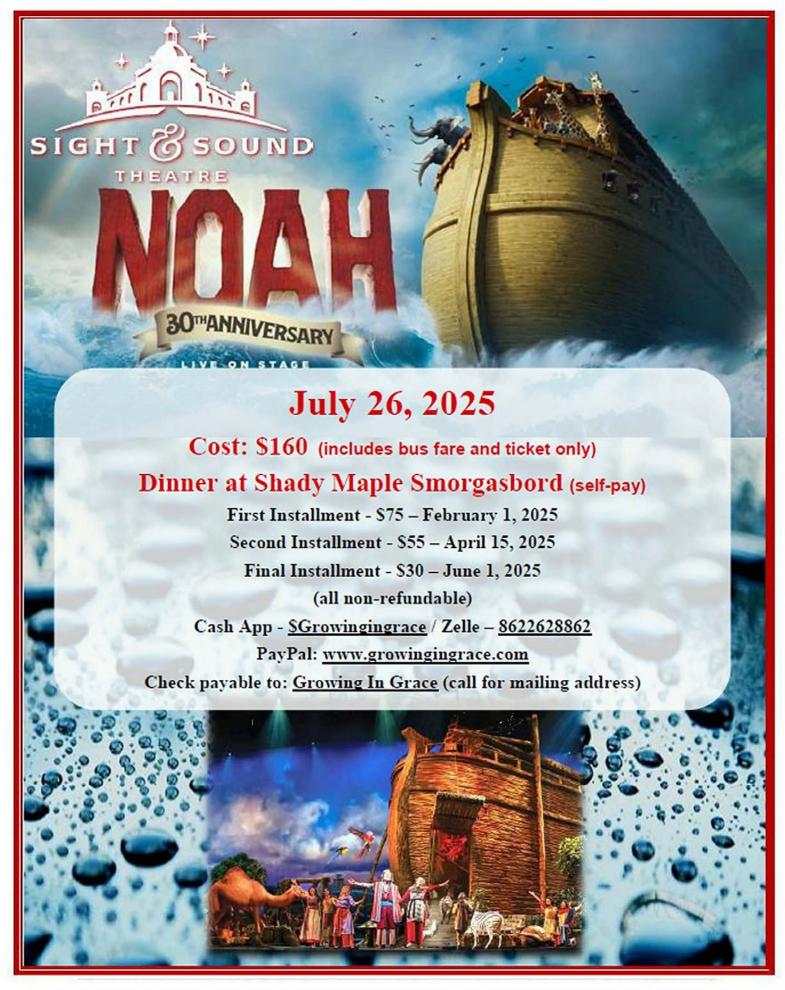




# CONGRATULATES & Wanda Royster



On behalf of President Janice Rainford and the entire Pi Xi Omega Chapter, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Wanda Royster for receiving the 'Make a Difference Educator Award.' Your tireless dedication and profound impact on our community is truly inspiring, and we celebrate this well-deserved recognition of your hardwork and compassion.



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**JOANNE RIVELLO** 

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