



**Freedom Fund Banquet
Keynote Speaker,
Mrs. Maggie Wallace Glover**

The Oconee County Branch NAACP held its 38th Annual Freedom Fund Banquet on Saturday, October 5, 2024, at the Seneca River Missionary Baptist Association Family Life Center in Seneca, S.C. The event began at 6 PM and emphasized this year's theme "Empowering Change: Voices of Unity".

We were able to meet again in-person for the third year following the end of the coronavirus pandemic. There were approximately 200 attendees present to enjoy the Freedom Awards Dinner and Banquet Award celebration.

The Freedom Fund Awards Dinner is Oconee County Branch NAACP's primary fundraiser designed to support programming, activism and outreach, branch student awards, as well as voter education and advocacy throughout the year. Banquet funds also assist the branch's mission to address issues in the community related to education, equity, labor and economic disparities, voting rights, housing opportunity, access to health care, and environmental and criminal justice. The bottom-line goal is to ensure that the rights of all citizens are protected.

The night got started with opening remarks and a welcome by Vice President Willie Washington. The attendees were asked for special prayer for President George Anderson

in his absence due to the need to take care of some on-going family issues. We were reminded that this year marked 70 years since the Oconee County Branch NAACP was chartered. We have been blessed to be able to provide continuous service in Oconee County since 1954.

Dr. Berlithia J. Pitts served as this year's Mistress of Ceremonies. She is a tenured full professor of English and African American Studies at Fort Valley State University (FVSU) where she has served on faculty since 2001. Personally, she is a native of the Perry Hill Community of Seneca, SC; an active member of Hope Church of Warner Robins, Georgia and Ebenezer Baptist Church of Seneca, South Carolina; and a spiritual member of New Vision Ministries Church of Newberry, South Carolina. She is the daughter of Edna Pitts-Reid and the late City Councilman Charles Reid, and Johnny and Ruby Jones.

Invocation for the program was provided by Reverend Cameron Townes, Pastor of the Pleasant Hill Baptist Church of Westminster SC.

The event's opening song, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" was led by Ms. Cindy Speed with assistance of the audience.

Blessing of the banquet meal was offered by Reverend Charles Crooks. The meal was catered by 'Manna From Heaven', owned by Reverend Patricia Grant, Pastor of the St. Matthew Baptist Church of Westminster SC. The food was good and plentiful.

After dinner, an inspiring, spirit filled, musical performance was provided by Lady Andrea Sims, of Spartanburg SC to the delight of all in audience.

A series of greetings were provided from the City of Seneca by Mayor Daniel W. Alexander, from the City of Walhalla by Mayor Tim Hall, and from the City of Westminster by City Council Member Anna Ruth May.

The keynote Speaker was the Honorable Maggie Wallace Glover, former teacher from Florence South Carolina, former Representative of the Sixth Congressional District of the South Carolina House, and former Senator of the State of South Carolina. She was the first African American woman to serve in these political positions.

She was introduced by Mrs. Beverly Jenkins, the immediate past President of the NAACP Oconee Branch.

An informative, inspirational and engaging message was presented by Mrs. Glover that was based on the subject: "Get to Your Better Days".

We were reminded that it is time to look in the mirror to identify the person who is most responsible for instituting the changes so badly needed in our society. She stressed the need for us to remember the lessons of patience learned from our elders early in life when

trying to effect change. But while benefitting from the memory of those lessons, it is time to pursue the changes we desire with all speed. During the highlight of her message, she emphasized the need to be very attentive to the power we have and need to vote; especially in the upcoming November 2024 General Election. She used segments of the Project 2025 proposal being advanced by conservative groups to emphasize that we cannot afford to sit by and allow this election to happen while observing from the side lines. The future of our democracy could very well depend on the election's outcome. The points presented were well received by those in attendance and left many charged up to continue fighting!

Oconee County Branch NAACP Treasurer Dr. Curtis D. White, Jr. presented this year's education student awards to Isaiah Mulwee (accepted by his father Charles Mulwee), Danielle Makayla, Caleb Majors, Avery Bulter, and Destiny Foxx (Willie Washington standing in),



Special thanks is extended to this year's Sponsors:

- Gold Sponsors
 - Oconee Federal Saving & Loan, Seneca Light and Water, City of Westminster, and Clemson University Office, Division of Community, Engagement, Belonging and Access.
- Bronze Sponsors
 - Valu Teachers, Blue Ridge Community Center, and BASF, Inc.

The Freedom Fund Partner Award was presented to the City of Seneca by Mr. Willie Jenkins, Sr. The City of Seneca has been a long-time supporter of our Freedom Fund Banquets for several years.



Pictured with Mr. Willie Jenkins, Sr. representing the city is Ms. Lekesha Benson, Mayor Daniel Alexander, and Mayor Pro Tem Ronnie O'kelley.

The following new Life Members were recognized by the NAACP Oconee County Branch:

- Mr. Ray Reese - Silver Life Member
- Reverend Bobby Poole – Silver Life Member
- Mr. Atlas Young – Silver Life Member
- Kenneth Carter – Silver Life Member (now deceased)

All current Life Members of the NAACP Oconee County Branch were also acknowledged by having them to stand.

On behalf of our Freedom Fund Committee members (Mr. George Anderson, Mr. Willie Washington, Dr. Curtis White, Jr., Mrs. Cecelia McWhorter, Mrs. Eartha White, Mr. Larry Barnes, and Ms. Ashley Dunston) and Chairperson Mrs. Kathy Jenkins, the NAACP Oconee Branch wishes to thank all guests and attendees for making the event a success.

We encourage community members to become NAACP members. We especially need Silver and Gold Life Members. Membership is the life blood of the NAACP. If interested, please contact us at phone: 864-972-6122, email: naacpscoconee@gmail.com, or visit our webpage: NAACPOconee.org.



This year's Freedom Fund banquet featured a '360 Photo Booth' for the first time. Those in attendance were offered an opportunity to have their picture taken using their choice of serval available props. A copy of their picture was then texted to their mobile phone free of charge. The usage of the photo booth proved to be a very poplar addition to our event.

END OF MESSAGE