

Commission on Human Rights

Franklin-Simpson County Human Rights Commission to present the John J Johnson award at King Day Breakfast

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The Franklin-Simpson County Human Rights Commission will hold a special event on National Martin Luther King Holiday and will present its first John J. Johnson Civil Rights Award.

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Breakfast will be at 8 a.m. (Central Standard Time) on the national holiday, which is Monday, Jan. 16. The breakfast will be held at 107 North College Street, Franklin, Ky., 42134-2129. The public is invited. Tickets are \$10 with advance reservations or \$12 at the door. Please call the chairperson of the Franklin-Simpson County commission, Wanda Tuck, at 270 776 4945, for advance reservations or information.

At the breakfast, the Franklin-Simpson County Human Rights Commission will announce two recipients of its very first John J. Johnson Award for their contributions to civil rights.

“The award is named for Franklin native John J. Johnson, who is currently the executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights,” said Chair Wanda Tuck. “We in Franklin believe such an award has been a long time coming, and it will recognize individuals who have been the keepers of the flame, and who continue to strive for equality and justice for all,” Tuck said.

The recipients of the first annual award will be community members Larry Nolan and Larry Dixon.

Larry Nolan was elected in May of 1975 as the 7th president of the Franklin-Simpson County Chapter of the NAACP. During his leadership, he encouraged African Americans to run for the school board, join the police force, and seek membership on the city zoning committee. He pushed for employment opportunities for African Americans in local industries, and confronted the Franklin Favorite newspaper for omitting NAACP news she said.

Larry Dixon was an original member of the Franklin-Simpson County Human Rights Commission and worked for the equality of all people, Tuck said.

“Both men still work, today, for the betterment of the citizens of the Franklin-Simpson County Community,” Tuck said.

John J. Johnson has been executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights since 2007. For 20 previous years, he was an officer at the national headquarters of the NAACP in Baltimore, Md. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is the largest civil rights arm in America. Johnson began his civil rights leadership in his hometown of Franklin, where he became the youngest-ever president of an NAACP local chapter at the age of 18. He served as president for 14 years of the Kentucky state NAACP, later moving to national headquarters in Baltimore. He and the state human rights commission were proud to assist Governor Steve Beshear in 2010 in leading Kentucky to recognize the state commission's 50 years of service by holding the largest civil rights conference in Kentucky history.

Kentucky Human Rights Commission Executive Director Johnson has spent a lifetime leading equality causes. In addition to his career, he has been a dedicated volunteer and activist confronting many challenges, from integrating the segregated swimming pool in his hometown of Franklin to the divestment of Kentucky's interest in South Africa. During his service as president of the state NAACP, he increased local Kentucky NAACP branches from four to 42. He served as an elected member of the NAACP National Board of Directors where he was elected one of its vice presidents. He served as chair of the Kentucky Coalition of Conscience. His work in civil and human rights led to a street named after him, John J. Johnson Avenue, in his hometown of Franklin, in 1993.

The Kentucky Human Rights Commission is the state government authority over enforcing the Kentucky Civil Rights Act. Through affiliation with national civil rights law entities, the commission also enforces the U.S. Civil Rights Act. These laws make discrimination illegal. For more information about civil rights or for help with discrimination, contact the state human rights commission at 1 800 292 5566.