

Commission on Human Rights

Kentucky Human Rights Commission today at state capitol announced three inductees to Gallery of Great Black Kentuckians

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The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights was proud to announce today three inductees into its Gallery of Great Black Kentuckians. The inductees are Kentucky State Senator Gerald Neal, the late Arthur Walters and the late William Blakey.

The inductions and accompanying Gallery of Great Black Kentuckians Poster unveilings took place at the 2012 Kentucky Black History Month Celebration, sponsored by the Kentucky Black Legislative Caucus.

Over 200 people attended the Black History Month Celebration at 11:30 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time), in the Capitol Rotunda. Governor Steve Beshear participated as did several legislators and Kentucky Human Rights Commission Executive Director John J. Johnson, and several commissioners. During the proceedings, Kentucky Human Rights Commission Chair George W. Stinson of Louisville, Ky., Commissioner Alma Randolph Patton of Owensboro, Ky., Commissioner Duane Bonifer of Greensburg, Ky., and Commissioner Henry Curtis of Frankfort announced the new inductees and unveiled their Great Black Kentuckian Gallery posters. Each inductee's family participated.

Gerald A. Neal, the state senator who currently represents District 33 in Jefferson County was the first African American man elected to the Kentucky State Senate. First elected in 1989, he has since been consecutively re-elected the last 22 years. This represents the second to the longest service of any African American member of the Kentucky General Assembly. He has been a strong voice for senior citizens, youth, the disadvantaged and minorities and a staunch supporter of education, healthcare and penal code reform. Neal, who organizes the Kentucky Legislative Black Caucus Annual Black History Month Celebration in the capitol, was surprised today by the announcement of his induction. His family, colleagues and staff managed to keep the secret from him for the last few months. They were in attendance today for the unveiling ceremony of his Gallery poster. Neal is also an inductee of the Kentucky Civil Rights Hall of Fame.

William Arthur "Buddy" Blakey (1943-2010), a native of Louisville, Ky., made a national impact by devoting his life's work to advocating for educational opportunities on behalf of minority and disadvantaged students. As a prominent Washington D.C. attorney, he led the lobbying

efforts that resulted in passage of the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Act as well as the Thurgood Marshall Legal Education Opportunity Program Act funded by the U.S. Congress. He served as legal counsel to the United Negro College Fund for more than 15 years. In recognition of his advocacy for historically black colleges and universities throughout the nation, Blakey was inducted into the National Black College Hall of Fame in 2001.

Arthur Meredith Walters (1918-2010), was a social service administrator who is most recognized for his role as the Louisville Urban League executive director from 1970 to 1987. Known as a “bridge-builder” and one of Louisville, Kentucky’s most effective leaders for justice and opportunity, he was among the inaugural inductees of the Kentucky Human Rights Commission Hall of Fame in 2000.

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights in 1970 introduced the Gallery of Great Black Kentuckians. The Gallery is the commission’s educational program that recognizes the achievements of African Americans from the Commonwealth who may not be highlighted in traditional histories, and who have made remarkable personal, professional or widely public achievements. Several have made a mark in the history of Kentucky and the nation. Since 1970, the commission has inducted 51 people as Great Black Kentuckians. Every Gallery inductee’s story is depicted on a special Gallery Poster. These educational posters are widely used by schools and libraries as tools to bring Kentucky African American role models and history into classrooms and to the public.

Visit the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights website to see the inductees’ Gallery posters at www.kchr.ky.gov.

The Kentucky Human Rights Commission is the state government agency that enforces the Kentucky and U.S. Civil Rights acts, which make discrimination illegal. For more information about civil rights, visit the website at www.kchr.ky.gov. From there, link to the commission Face Book or Twitter pages for civil rights protected class-related news and announcements. For help with discrimination, call the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights at 1.800.292.5566.