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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Neighborhood Heroes Honored for Making a Difference in Their Community**

*NHS Recognized Community Leaders During the  
7<sup>th</sup> Annual Neighborhood Leadership Awards*

**CHICAGO** – Nine inspiring community leaders were honored for their outstanding contributions to revitalize their communities during Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago’s (NHS) 7<sup>th</sup> annual Neighborhood Leadership Awards. Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, along with more than 300 civic, community and corporate leaders attended the award ceremony held on Oct. 18.

Whether standing up against crime, providing access to job training and employment opportunities, or giving ex-offenders a second chance these residents and organizations are finding solutions to improve their community. With nine neighborhood offices NHS works in partnership with local businesses, government and residents to rebuild communities by providing safe and affordable housing.

“Our work is rooted and informed by the needs of the neighborhoods we serve, said Kristin Faust, NHS president. “We all play an important role in creating opportunities for people to live in affordable homes, improve their lives and strengthen their neighborhoods.”

The 2016 Neighborhood Leadership Award recipients included:

- Monique N. Dockery from Auburn Gresham – As principal of Westcott Elementary School she understands the complexity of leading a school in challenging times in an urban community. She ensures families have access to resources by partnering with the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation to implement a Parent Resource room to offer job postings and basic minimal skills training to enter an apprenticeship program with CVS Pharmacy.
- Ann and Richard Neal from Chicago Lawn/Gage Park – The Neal’s have lived on the 6400 block of Artesian since 1988 and have been a force for making sure that people respect each other, take care of their homes and have a pride in their block and community. They gently but forcefully challenge those who cause disruptions and due to their efforts the block has remained strong and unified.
- Darryl “Smitty” Smith from Englewood – Serves as president of the Englewood Political Task Force, which has been instrumental in making construction jobs and contracts available to

Englewood residents including the current development of Englewood Square located at 63<sup>rd</sup> and Halsted. These efforts secured over 800 jobs for local residents and drove approximately \$40 million back to the community.

- Elgin Community Network from Fox Valley – Citizen-based organization that gives a voice to people who might not otherwise have contacted the city about their concerns. Since 2009 the organization has recruited over 800 volunteers to participate in community beautification projects and offer resources to residents.
- Ronnie Lofton Sr. from North Lawndale – For over two decades he has provided education and economic outreach, which has positively impacted the Lawndale community. Whether providing tutoring, health fairs or allowing his restaurant to be used as a community room Mr. Lofton is dedicated to enriching the community by providing employment opportunities to youth as well as support to enroll in college.
- Aaron Mallory from Roseland – As one of the youngest leaders in the Roseland community, Aaron serves provides a sense of direction and hope to young African American males. A lifelong, resident of Roseland, Aaron started the Guide Right Organization in 2008 to provide innovative social services including a property rehab apprenticeship program that allows teens to receive a stipend while learning how to rehab a home.
- Fathers and Blessings from the South Suburbs – Strives to break down the barriers that an ex-offender may experience so that they may become responsible, independent, productive citizens and family members. The organization provides a safe and supportive transitional housing environment that offers skills training, employment, treatment and resources to enable re-entry into the community.
- Quentin Love from West Humboldt Park – In 2011 he opened the doors to Turkey Chop Gourmet Grill, the first sit-down restaurant in over 20 years along Chicago Avenue. In response to the reality that 1 in 3 people go hungry in Chicago, Turkey Chop closes its doors on Mondays to offer free hot meals to those in need. As of August 2016, more than 75,000 free meals have been served. In addition, Mr. Love offers free healthy cooking classes on Monday evenings to combat health issues in the community like diabetes and obesity.
- Jean Clark from Woodlawn – As a resident leader, Jean has fought to clean up issues related to gang problems, drugs, and troubled buildings in her community. She also fights to keep vacant single-family buildings owner-occupied. Jean is touted by all who know her as the crusader for the community.

During the award ceremony NHS also celebrated its fiscal year 2016 accomplishments. From April 1, 2015 through March 31, 2016, NHS served nearly 5,000 clients by providing home buyer education classes and one-on-one counseling; access to credit and grants to assist in the purchase or rehab of their home; and counseled and saved homeowners at risk of foreclosure. NHS has nine neighborhood offices located in Auburn Gresham, Chicago Lawn/Gage Park, Englewood, Fox Valley, North Lawndale, Roseland, South Suburbs, West Humboldt Park and Woodlawn.

Photos of the recipients receiving their awards as well as videos highlighting their efforts may be downloaded by visiting [\[here\]](#).

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**About NHS**

Established in 1975, Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago Inc. (NHS) is a nonprofit neighborhood revitalization organization committed to creating opportunities for people to live in affordable homes, improve their lives and strengthen their neighborhoods. We have served more than 223,000 clients by providing free Home Buyer Education classes and assistance to distressed homeowners to save their home, as well as fixed-rate loans to purchase, refinance or rehab a home. For more information about NHS, visit [nhschicago.org](https://nhschicago.org) or call 773-349-4111.