



## **SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: 90/60**

*honoring 90 years of age and 60 years of business*

**THE HONORABLE DR. CLIFFORD E. DEBAPTISTE**

The Community Foundation is proud to spotlight the Honorable Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste as he celebrates two birthdays this year:

- He was born on May 18, 1924.
- He opened the DeBaptiste Funeral Home on September 12, 1954.

90 years of age and 60 years of business: hence, the 90/60 Special Award.

The young Clifford first visited West Chester in the 1940s. This began a lifetime love affair with the town, and he vowed to return and open up his own business. In 1954, after serving in the U.S. Army, graduating from mortuary school, and marrying Inez Manning, they opened the DeBaptiste Funeral Home in the borough. The business prospered. They opened a larger facility during the Great Blizzard of January 1965 at 25 South Worthington Street, where it remains to this day.

“Uplifting life through service” is Dr. DeBaptiste’s credo. He is widely known for his business acumen, civic leadership, religious guidance and community philanthropy. Four years after his beloved wife Inez passed away, Dr. DeBaptiste took office as West Chester's first African American Mayor. He served two incredibly successful terms from 1994-2002.

Dr. DeBaptiste’s good deeds go far beyond West Chester. He has been honored by the NAACP for his business leadership. In 2009 Dr. DeBaptiste was recognized by the National Purple Heart Association for his service in the U.S. Army during the 1940s and in the Korean War. In 2014 Dr. DeBaptiste was coronated a Sovereign Grand Inspector General, which is the Thirty-Third and last degree in Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry.

A member of numerous local, county, state and national funeral director associations, Dr. DeBaptiste was appointed by the governor to the Pennsylvania State Board of Funeral Directors which he chaired for 13 years.

Education is the focus of Dr. DeBaptiste’s philanthropic commitments. A long-time supporter of West Chester University, he served as a member of the Council of Trustees from 1968 to 1972 and as a board member of the West Chester University Fund. In 1991, he was awarded the President’s Medallion for Service, and in 1999, he received an honorary doctorate of public service.

In 2014, Dr. DeBaptiste made a lead donation to kick off a successful fundraising campaign spearheaded by the University’s Frederick Douglass Institute. The Institute commemorates the former slave, distinguished orator, author, abolitionist, and statesman who delivered his last public lecture on West Chester's campus in 1895.