

THE HONORABLE CLIFFORD E. DEBAPTISTE VISIONARY AWARD – established 2022



The Chester County Community Foundation proudly establishes the Honorable Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste Visionary Award to recognize exceptional individuals whose civic engagement, community service, and charitable philanthropy light the way and inspire others.

The Visionary Award is bestowed to someone who has worked toward creating a future that we have only imagined; creating a stronger, more prosperous community through their life's work.

The recipient is a:

- ◆ **Servant of Community**, with respect to community building and its diverse community members.
- ◆ **Bridge Builder**, excelling in building bridges across multiple systems, institutions and communities.
- ◆ **Door Opener**, as they move forward, they leave the door open and create a pathway for the next generation to excel even further than they have.
- ◆ **Visionary**, with their eye on the future, they imagine a world where equity, growth, and innovation create a community where all can prosper, be nourished, and be free and safe.

This is the life and legacy of Honorable Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste. A Servant, A Bridge Builder, A Door Opener. A brilliant Visionary who doesn't just look forward, but looks back. A powerful leader, who in turn empowers others to be the change they wish to see in the world.

“Uplifting life through service” has been Dr. DeBaptiste's longstanding credo. Dr. DeBaptiste is widely recognized for his business acumen, civic leadership, spiritual guidance, and community philanthropy.

In 1954 after serving in the U.S. Army and graduating from mortuary school, he and his young bride Inez Manning DeBaptiste made West Chester their home. Over the years, they grew their family and launched a successful business, DeBaptiste Funeral Homes.

In 1994, Dr. DeBaptiste took office as West Chester's first African American Mayor. He served two incredibly successful terms from 1994-2002.

Throughout his time as a funeral director, elected official, and community advocate, he has received more than 500 awards and recognitions of service.



Dr. DeBaptiste's daughter Lillian has always been at the helm with him, astutely navigating when to work behind the scenes and when to come

forward. A steadfast, dedicated community leader and proven businesswoman, Lillian's

commitment to economic prosperity and equity compelled her to run for public office in 2020. She was installed as West Chester's Mayor in January 2021. Taking up her father's civic torch, she works toward environmental justice and social equity, especially in the parts of West Chester that have historically been neglected.

Dr. DeBaptiste's two other daughters are not in the public eye. Celeste DeBaptiste M.D. and Inez DeBaptiste Esq. have also been inspired to give to the community in more private ways, via their professional career accomplishments in the medical field and legal field.

Dr. DeBaptiste's family legacy is intelligent, accomplished children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, each of whom, in their own way, dedicate themselves to bettering our community's quality of life.

Dr. DeBaptiste's philanthropic devotion is widespread. Over the years, Dr. DeBaptiste has created a very large handful of charitable funds at the Community Foundation to honor colleagues and friends. Plus, the DeBaptiste Foundation awards grants to further social justice, civic engagement and education in the greater West Chester area.

Through all he has done, Dr. DeBaptiste has inspired scores...hundreds...more likely, thousands of people to become more active in their communities. He is truly a model for others to emulate.



He inspires each of us to do more, “uplifting life thru service” and creating a stronger, more prosperous community.

Chester County is fortunate to benefit from the longstanding community legacy of the Honorable Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste and the entire DeBaptiste family.

