



## News Release

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### **2024 SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARD RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED**

HOLLAND, MICHIGAN –The Holland Human Relations Commission (HRC) presented the 2024 Social Justice Awards and the 2024 Youth Social Justice Award at City Hall on Wednesday, January 15th; a recording of the awards is available at

<https://vimeo.com/1047496671>

For the past 26 years, the annual Social Justice Awards have recognized 121 individuals and organizations who exemplify the virtues of social justice by promoting equal opportunity and equal access for all residents. Awards are presented in the areas of Housing, Education, Employment, Government Relations, Community Relations, Health Services, and Accessibility. The Holland Youth Advisory Council selects and awards the Youth Social Justice Award recipient. View a list of previous Social Justice Award recipients at [socialjusticeawards.cityofholland.com](https://socialjusticeawards.cityofholland.com).

“It takes all of us, working together, to build a community of belonging for everyone.

The Human Relations Commission is proud to honor these individuals and organizations who inspire us and advance Holland toward greater equity and access for all residents,” said Jeff Minkus, Chair of the Human Relations Commission.

The 2024 Social Justice Award recipients are:

**EDUCATION: Mosaic Counseling**

For the past eight years, Mosaic Counseling has provided free mental health treatment to Holland Public Schools and 30 other schools across Ottawa County. Mosaic brings mental health supports onto school campuses, eliminating many barriers for families and students including transportation, language, insurance, external referral processes, and reducing the time often needed to get on a case load with another local agency. In addition, Mosaic has trained 12,000 adults and teens in their QPR (Question. Persuade. Refer.) suicide prevention program. They partner with Holland Hospital, the Mental Health Foundation of West Michigan Be NICE-Ottawa County, Community Mental Health, and other mental health agencies to bring awareness to the community.

“Mosaic had an idea 15 years ago to send our therapists into local schools to provide professional counseling that was free to students to remove the financial and transportation barriers that were keeping them from accessing mental health services,” explained Sarah Lewakowski of Mosaic Counseling. “Our Outreach Program has grown from one school to 27 schools in Ottawa County with 15 of those currently in the districts of West Ottawa and Holland. This recognition brings awareness to Mosaic and to our mission to serve the mental health needs of our community.”

## GOVERNMENT RELATIONS: **Ottawa County Community Action Agency (OCCAA)**

The Ottawa County Community Action Agency (OCCAA) utilizes government and community services, and some creative problem solving, to empower people to gain financial independence around food security, utility assistance, weatherization of their homes, and emergency home repair. The team secured grant support to utilize DoorDash to deliver supplemental food supplies to senior citizens who were unable to make it to distribution centers.

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS: **3Sixty**

Working in Holland's Eastcore Neighborhood since 2005, 3Sixty's work is rooted in seeking equity of opportunity and inclusion of all persons within the neighborhood and extending into other city neighborhoods. The 3Sixty Tool Library, with its collection of construction and yard tools, is a resource for households that do not have the equipment to maintain or repair their homes or landscapes. Since 2021, 3Sixty has hosted the Tulip City Walls Mural Festival which celebrates the community with a diversity of artists, music, and food.

On receiving the recognition, Jake Norris, Director 3-Sixty shared, "Every community faces challenges, but instead of focusing on what's *wrong*, 3Sixty starts with what's *strong*. We leverage the gifts already present to make our neighborhoods more equitable and more meaningful places to live. And some of the most overlooked gifts are those of the individual neighbors living in Holland. We are honored to support them in making our neighborhoods better places for everyone living here!"

## HOUSING: **Brothers & Sisters Homes**

Brothers and Sisters Homes go beyond providing basic food and shelter for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Each resident of the five adult foster care homes is valued as a unique individual who engages in the life of the community through work, volunteering, and regular participation in community and church activities. Board Officer Erik Emig explained that “In return, the Holland community is enriched by opportunities to engage with and get to know the residents, thereby recognizing our sameness and allowing perceived differences to fade.”

Jim Greydanus, Executive Director of the Holland Deacons’ Conference CRC explained, “This selection is recognition of the great work of the staff of Brothers and Sisters Homes and the Board and supporters of the Holland Deacons' Conference in providing homes for special individuals in our community. More than that, it honors and recognizes these residents as members of the Holland community. This award sends the message, ‘We see you and value you in our community’.”

## HEALTH SERVICES: **HEARTSafe Holland**

Out-of-hospital cardiac arrests affect more than 350,000 people annually across the U.S. and are nearly 90% fatal. **HEARTSafe Holland** works to equip our community with the knowledge and resources to respond to these emergencies. HEARTSafe Holland conducts hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation training (CPR) at businesses, schools, gathering places, and community events. When 911 is notified of a cardiac event, two location-aware apps become activated. PulsePoint Respond alerts

HEARTSafe trained individuals within 0.8-mile vicinity so that they can respond and perform CPR until the paramedics arrive. PulsePoint AED directs the responders to the nearest available automated external defibrillator (AED). This multi-faceted approach significantly increases the patient's chances for survival. In 2023, HEARTSafe Holland trained 15% of the community population (about 4,300 individuals), and the city became the fifth community in the U.S. to receive the HEARTSafe Community designation.

“Through this award we hope to encourage more residents to take our hour-long CPR training so they can recognize and provide immediate treatment for sudden cardiac arrest,” said Steven Stegeman from HeartSafe Holland. “Our goal is to maintain 15 percent of the Holland population trained.”

#### **ACCESSIBILITY: Chase Magsig**

As a Deaf Language Model for Holland Public Schools (HPS), Chase Magsig champions two-way communication between the Deaf/Hard of Hearing and the Hearing world. Chase conducts ASL (American Sign Language) lessons in each of his Deaf students' classes, creating environments for deaf students to engage with and feel like a part of their classes amongst their hearing peers. In 2023, Chase invited the community into the deaf world by teaching a free online ASL class that attracted people throughout the community. In the summers, Chase utilizes ASL to help Camp Sunshine campers develop organic friendships with other campers. He also mentors the parents of Deaf/Hard of Hearing children, working with Michigan Hands and Voices.

#### YOUTH SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARD: **Karina Martinez**

Karina Martinez, a student in Holland High School's Early College Program, is a voice for the underrepresented and promotes equity for the marginalized. She has tutored bilingual students who are struggling in school and assists immigrants learning civics with the goal of passing the citizenship test. She is in her third year serving on the Holland Youth Advisory Council where she is a member of the Core Council and chairs the Recreation Committee. Karinna was selected for the Youth Social Justice Award by her peers on the Holland Youth Advisory Core Council.

"For me, this award means that my peers recognize me as someone with a good heart who is working towards creating a better community," said Karinna Martinez. "It gives me more of a platform to advocate for inclusivity, kindness, and celebrating all people in the community."

#### LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: **Kay Walvoord**

Kay Walvoord has been a driving force at the Holland Symphony Orchestra (HSO) for the past 33 years, including two decades as executive director. Her vision has made the HSO a welcoming space where music connects, inspires, and unites our community. Kay initiated the Music Unites Us concerts celebrating global and physical diversity, featuring soloists from widely varying backgrounds and traditions. She also established free symphony concerts at Kollen Park, a music curriculum for fourth graders, and collaborations with the Herrick District Library and Big Read Lakeshore.

"To me, this award shows that the HSO's attempts at diversity are working and are having a positive effect on the community. Genuine feelings of inclusion in the concerts

created have been expressed by both our ethnic friends but also our Anglo audiences. The education programs reach all fourth-grade students in the entire area as well as through our youth orchestras and library collaborations. That means we are reaching our goal in small ways of serving the entire community. We have only scratched the surface,” said Kay Walvoord.

(Descriptions pulled from organization websites and nomination forms.)

**About the Human Relations Commission:**

The Holland Human Relations Commission promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and access in housing, education, employment, and public service. The commission pursues a community of belonging for all residents, with consideration for groups that are underrepresented, underserved, or marginalized. Learn more about HRC goals and activities by visiting [humanrelations.cityofholland.com](http://humanrelations.cityofholland.com) and by following along on [Facebook](#).

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***Photo Caption:***

Back Row, L-R: Sarah Lewakowski, Mosaic Counseling; Jim Greydanus, Holland Deacons' Conference; Kay Walvoord; Steve Stegeman, HEARTSafe Holland; Chase Magsig.

Front Row, L-R: Jake Norris and Lori Corbat-Appledorn, 3Sixty; Karinna Martinez; Jennifer Brozowski, Ottawa County Community Action Agency.