

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Contact: Priscilla Phifer at 248.497.8722 or Gwendolyn Powell at 313.862.9525****Public Charity Honors Local Heroes at Black, No-Tie Affair**

Edythe Hayden Friley, Dr. Delores Harris, Curtis Blackwell and Major General Gwendolyn Bingham are not your household names, yet these extraordinary individuals have all impacted countless households. And on November 14, each will be honored for their contributions on the local, state and/or national level at the Torch of Wisdom Foundation's (TOWF) fourth annual "Honoring Local Heroes: Changing Tomorrow Today" at Les Stanford Cadillac in Dearborn, the foundation's host and sponsor. A "Black, No-Tie" affair, the event is from 7 to 10 PM, with entertainment by "313" band of Baker's Keyboard Lounge, complimentary valet service, and Hors d'oeuvres. Doors open at 6:30.



Edythe Hayden Friley



MG Gwendolyn Bingham



Dr. Delores Harris



Curtis Blackwell

Edythe Hayden Friley is this year's *Scholarship Award* recipient. She is being honored for her longstanding commitment as a Detroit Public Schools educator, her involvement with the charter school movement, and her work as an adjunct professor at several colleges. Additionally, she will be recognized for being the major driving force behind the development and founding of the Detroit Delta Preparatory Academy for Social Justice, which opened in August of this year. It was in the fall of 2010, when a meeting on "Education as a Civil Right" piqued Friley's interest. From there, Friley and others brainstormed to garner support for starting the academy. Tireless energy, research and hard work led to writing a proposal and receiving an \$800,000 grant from Michigan Future in 2011 to develop the school.

Dr. Delores Harris, also known as Lady Dee, is an international performer and recording artist who has been performing since age four. She is the foundation's *Cultural Arts Award* recipient. Lady Dee served for

many years as an elementary and middle school principal, where she was known as Dr. Harris. She sang for her students and brought international, national and local recording artists, actors and actresses to share with and motivate students. These include Trey Songz, Dwele and K'Jon. Since her retirement in 2012, Lady Dee continues using her vocal and acting gifts for philanthropic efforts to support children and other worthy causes to help raise funds for nonprofit organizations. One of these groups is Allee Willis' (Grammy, Emmy, Tony and Webby Award-winning songwriter) event to raise funds for The Mosaic Theatre and The Heidelberg Project. Another is Beyond Basics, a literacy organization. In August 2014, Delores Harris was voted Detroit's Black Music Awards' Best Female R&B "Vocalist of the Year."

Curtis Blackwell is the *Community Enrichment* awardee. He is the co-founder and vice president of Lifting As We Climb, Inc., a national grassroots organization that addresses educational and development needs of underprivileged, low-income youth within the City of Detroit and Washington, DC. The organization prides itself on being a "youth-to-youth" mentoring organization, with a specific mission to uplift disadvantaged, "at-risk" youth. Mr. Blackwell has crafted the "Sound Mind, Sound Body Football Academy," an initiative impacting over 10,000 youth in ten years of some of the best and brightest talent in the country, where graduation rates are 85 percent and where over 500 have been drafted by the National Football League.

Confirmed by the U.S. Senate in April 2013, **Major General (MG) Gwendolyn Bingham** is the first female Commander of the United States Army Tank Automotive and Armaments Command Life Cycle Management Command (TACOM LCMC) and only the second African-American to hold the prestigious position of Commanding General in its 73-year history. The Torch of Wisdom Foundation will honor MG Bingham with its first *Trailblazer* award for her multitude of staff and leadership positions throughout her stellar, noteworthy career, including being the first woman or first African-American in other capacities.

The partially tax-deductible donation to attend the event is \$50/person. Other donations are welcome. Event chair and co-chairs are Gloria N. Smith and Nicole M. Daniels, respectively. Paulette Boggs is board chair and president of the Torch of Wisdom Foundation, a public charity, which was established in 1993 by a group of civic-minded women. The foundation provides grants to support scholastic achievement and community service programs. **To learn more about the foundation or to purchase tickets**, please visit www.towfinc.org or call the office at 248.327.6815.

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