

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LT. GOVERNOR HABIB'S OFFICE ANNOUNCES WASHINGTON LEADERSHIP AWARDS; WINNERS INCLUDE CORONAVIRUS RESEARCH PIONEER, FOOD AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS, LONGTIME SEATTLE PHILANTHROPISTS AND CIVIC LEADERS

Olympia - Earlier today Lt. Governor Cyrus Habib's office announced the recipients of the Washington Leadership Awards, which are given every year on behalf of the State of Washington in recognition of outstanding service and leadership.

This year, the [Washington State Leadership Board](#) selected winners for the following categories: Dr. Helen Chu for Washingtonian of the Year, [Northwest Harvest](#) for Organization of the Year, [Community Passageways](#) for the Washington Justice For All Award, and Bill Gates Sr. & Jim Ellis for the Washington Legacy of Service Award.

Since 1975, the Washington State Leadership Board has hosted the annual Washington Leadership Awards ceremony. Past award recipients include well-known community leaders and philanthropists like Paul Allen and Priscilla Bullitt Collins, as well as local non-profit organizations such as Hilltop Artists in Tacoma and Treehouse For Kids in Seattle. The event, which in the past has been held at the Governor's Mansion, will this year be held in a virtual format on February 16th, 2021.

"This past year has been unlike any other, and these individuals and organizations are just as extraordinary," said Lt. Governor Cyrus Habib. "It is an honor to recognize them in this special way on behalf of all Washingtonians."

Nickolas Bumpaous, Chair of the Washington State Leadership Board, said of the winners: "The breadth of talent and the depth of compassion shown by each of these awardees deeply inspires us. I am greatly looking forward to formally celebrating them this February."

"It is important that as a state, we recognize and elevate the people and organizations who exemplify outstanding leadership," said Lt. Governor-elect Denny Heck. "This year's recipients have each demonstrated a tireless commitment to improving the lives of others, showing us all what strong, thoughtful leadership looks like. I am proud our state will recognize their enormous contributions."

The Washington State Leadership Board is the statutory non-profit organization charged with bestowing honors on behalf of the state and administering a number of leadership programs in partnership with the Lt. Governor's office. Traditionally, the Lt. Governor's office has coordinated the annual awards ceremony with the organization.

More information about the award recipients and the awards ceremony can be found below.

WASHINGTON LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNERS

Washingtonian of the Year: Dr. Helen Chu

[Helen Chu, M.D., M.P.H.](#), is a board-certified physician with UW Medicine. She serves as a UW Associate Professor of Medicine and Allergy and Infectious Diseases and as an Adjunct Associate Professor of Epidemiology and Global Health. She is credited as the first physician to identify community spread of the novel coronavirus in the United States.

Dr. Chu and her team made their discovery [despite facing significant professional and bureaucratic pressures](#). In February 2020, Dr. Chu was part of a team of investigators called the Seattle Flu Study, an epidemiology study that involved collecting nasal swabs from the community. Concerned about the coronavirus, the team made a request to the federal government to test the swabs they had already collected for the novel virus, which was denied. As news about the coronavirus worsened however, the team decided to have the samples tested, soon finding a positive case from someone with no history of travel to Wuhan. Their discovery and ongoing work has helped shape the state's response to the coronavirus.

Early in the pandemic, Dr. Chu also enrolled the first patients in the United States with SARS-CoV-2 infection into research studies. This work led to development of therapies, treatments, and vaccines, including use of remdesivir and monoclonal antibodies for treatment, and the Moderna mRNA vaccine for prevention.

Washington Organization of the Year: Northwest Harvest

[Northwest Harvest](#) is a food justice organization working to end hunger and to address the root causes of poverty. They provide equitable access to nutritious food by partnering with 375 food banks, meal programs, and schools to distribute food to people who need it in every county, across the state of Washington. Northwest Harvest aims to change policy and practices that perpetuate racism and inequity, and to direct investment into expanding opportunity and achieving a more just society.

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to drive food insecurity, Northwest Harvest has undertaken a massive increase in food distribution, and is piloting new initiatives including direct cash assistance and grocery voucher cards to meet the unprecedented need.

Washington Justice for All Award: Community Passageways

[Community Passageways](#) is a Seattle-based non-profit organization with the goal of reaching zero youth incarceration. As a felony diversion and prevention organization, Community Passageways operates a number of programs focused on leadership, mental and behavioral health, and wraparound services. The organization employs people who have personal experiences with the school-to-prison pipeline.

The organization was founded in 2017 by Dominique "Coach Dom" Davis, a co-founder of King County's [Choose 180](#) program. Since its founding, Community Passageways has worked with many young people facing charges, 70% of whom received no prison time while remaining engaged with the program and in the community.

Washington Legacy of Service Award: Bill Gates Sr. & Jim Ellis

This year, the Legacy of Service Award will be awarded jointly to [Bill Gates Sr.](#) and [Jim Ellis](#), philanthropists who worked together at the law firm Preston Gates & Ellis, now known as K&L Gates.

Jim Ellis, who passed away on October 22, 2019, was a celebrated advocate for civic causes and the environment. He played a leading role in cleaning up Lake Washington, created the Mountain to Sound Greenway Trust, and established the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle, the predecessor to King County Metro, among other accomplishments.

Bill Gates Sr., father of Microsoft co-founder, Bill Gates, is remembered for his philanthropy in Washington State and throughout the world. Integral in the founding of the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, Gates Sr. was a champion for education, global health, and social and economic equity. He passed away September 14th, 2020.

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WASHINGTON LEADERSHIP AWARDS
EVENT INFORMATION

Date:

Tuesday, February 16

Time:

6:00-7:00 p.m.

Location:

Virtual | Link to Come

RSVP:

Kristina@WashingtonLeaders.org

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