



InterFaith Leadership Award Dinner (ILAD)

Thursday, September 7, 2023
SRC Arena and Events Center

"We can have
faith in the future
only if we have
faith in ourselves."

- John F. Kennedy



*Congratulations to the
2023 InterFaith
Leadership Award
Dinner Honorees*



The Sikh Foundation of Syracuse's mission is to support the welfare of all humans; preserve and promote Sikh heritage, history and philosophy; and prepare youth for tomorrow's world by virtue of the Sikh ideals of universal equality, utilizing a contemporary world perspective that promotes peace and harmony. The foundation provides a Learning Center (Gurudwara Sahib) in Liverpool, where the religious and spiritual needs of the community are met.



Dr. Baljinder Singh
and
Gurvinder Kaur





THE AHMAD AND ELIZABETH
EL-HINDI FOUNDATION

Advancing Opportunity Through
Cross-Cultural Collaboration

Our Family Wishes to Extend its Thanks to IFW of CNY
and Congratulate the 2023 *Faith in Our Future* Honorees:

*Michael Balanoff, Esq. • Sharon Brangman, MD
Dom Cambareri, Esq. • Ruth Chen, PhD • Anthony Davis
Sharon Owens • Tim Saka • Kent Syverud*

Congratulations
TO
TONIGHT'S HONOREES

Michael Balanoff, Esq.

Sharon Brangman, MD

Dom Cambareri, Esq.

Ruth Chen, PhD

Anthony Davis

Sharon Owens

Tim Saka

Kent Syverud

We are pleased to recognize you this evening.

*Jewish Community Center of Syracuse,
Jewish Federation of Central New York, and
Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York*



SAM POMERANZ
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER
OF SYRACUSE



The Jewish Community
Foundation of CENTRAL NEW YORK



Jewish Federation
OF CENTRAL NEW YORK

2023 InterFaith Leadership Award Dinner



Welcome

Dan Cummings | *Tonight's Emcee*

Procession of Agency Leadership, Board of Directors, Faith Leaders, Honorary Event Co-Chairs, Tonight's Honorees and Agency Staff

The processional song, "American Land," is performed by Bruce Springsteen whose music speaks to the broad American experience, telling stories about the daily lives of people, events, and personal, social, and political issues. The song tells the story of the immigrant experience by talking about the promise of America, the hard work of the immigrant, and the troubles immigrants face. The song has a connection to Pete Seeger, as well as to a poem, "He Lies in the American Land," written by Slovakian immigrant Andrew Kovaly in the early 20th century. A live version of "American Land" was released as a bonus track on the "American Land Edition" of Springsteen's 2006 *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* album. A studio version came out on Springsteen's 2012 *Wrecking Ball* album.

Opening Prayer

The Most Rev. Douglas J. Lucia, *Bishop, Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse*

Land Acknowledgement

The Round Table of Faith Leaders presents the agency's new statement to show respect to the Onondaga People.

Welcome

Dr. Baljinder Singh and Gurvinder Kaur, *Sikh Foundation of Syracuse, Event Presenting Sponsors*
Catherine Gerard, *Chair, InterFaith Works Board of Directors*

President's Message

Beth A. Broadway, *InterFaith Works President/CEO*

Dinner

Tribute Video

Award Presentations

Dr. Baljinder Singh and Gurvinder Kaur | Beth A. Broadway | Catherine Gerard

Our 2023 Honorees

Michael Balanoff, Esq.

*Barbara Davis, Jewish Federation of Central New York,
and Jewish Observer, presenting*

Sharon A. Brangman, MD

Mantosh Dewan, MD, Upstate Medical University, presenting

Dom Cambareri, Esq.

Steve Cambareri, Cambareri & Brenneck, PLLC, presenting

Ruth Chen, PhD

Aminy Audi, Stickley Furniture | Mattress, presenting

Anthony Davis

The Rev. Phil Manuel Turner, Bethany Baptist Church, presenting

Sharon Owens

The Hon. Ben Walsh, City of Syracuse, presenting

Tim Saka

The Rev. Suzi Harriff, Mission Hope Community, presenting

Chancellor Kent Syverud

*Mian Muhammad Abdul Hamid, Convener of the Student Assembly
of Interfaith Leaders, Syracuse University Hendricks Chapel, presenting*

Remarks on Behalf of Honorees

Sharon Owens

Closing Prayer

Madalyn Smith, *Convener, InterFaith Works Round Table of Faith Leaders*



2023 InterFaith Leadership Award Honorees



“I come to work thinking about what the next generation is going to need from my generation. I want to hear what they think their community should look like in 10, 15, 20 years. I want to make sure they’re prepared and that we are responsive to their needs.”

Michael Balanoff, Esq.

Michael Balanoff, Esq.

President and CEO, Jewish Federation of Central New York

Michael Balanoff is the President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Central New York, and a member of the InterFaith Works Round Table of Faith Leaders.

Balanoff received his Juris Doctor in 1967 from Boston College Law School, and was a practicing attorney for 50 years, working with leading law firms, including Bousquet Holstein, PLLC, previously Green & Seifter. He also served as Director of Development for Legal Services of Central New York, a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide free legal assistance to low-income people across the Central New York region to help people and communities change law, policy and systems to promote equity and create pathways out of poverty.

As a member of the Round Table of Faith Leaders, Balanoff values the opportunity to engage with a diverse group of colleagues committed to affirming the dignity of all faith traditions. “I have enjoyed my role on the Round Table,” he says. “I have met many people I would not normally have met and whom I greatly respect. I have developed a greater faith in our community because of the welcoming nature of the Round Table to all ethnic and religious groups.”

“Jewish history is unfortunately characterized by discrimination, antisemitism, pogroms and violence. To be welcomed into a community and to feel that I can contribute is very important to me. Being on that Round Table is a great honor, and I feel that I’m being helpful, but so is the community of leadership, especially the faith leaders who are there and the administration of InterFaith Works.”

The Jewish Federation’s long-standing involvement with InterFaith Works dates back to the organization’s earliest days when it came together as the Syracuse Area Interreligious Council (SAIC) with headquarters at Temple Concord. “The Council brought people together, especially clergy, to create understanding and goodwill and to try to create what I would call a more peaceful, loving and cooperative family of groups,” he recalls. “To me that’s very important because, as a Jew with an understanding of Jewish history, it’s very important that Jews be accepted, respected and able to live peacefully in a community.”

For Balanoff, the theme of *Faith in Our Future* is an expression of faith in the resilience of Central New York. “I moved here over 50 years ago, raised a family here, and had a law practice that I thought was successful. And I love it. It’s given me and my family tremendous opportunities that I want to pass on to the next generation and generations to come. I’ve seen a very vibrant community undergo dramatic economic decline, and I believe that that’s turning around and will turn around even more. I think Micron could be a real game changer. It will bring more industry and more jobs and more opportunities for people into our community. But I also see not-for-profits like InterFaith Works and others dealing with quality-of-life issues to create opportunities for people to thrive and flourish in whatever areas they choose. We still have a lot of problems in this community, but I think that people of goodwill are really trying to solve them, and I believe that will happen.”

Balanoff activates his personal faith in our future by cultivating tomorrow’s leaders through his work at the Jewish Federation. “Every day I come to work thinking about what the next generation is going to need from my generation. What are we going to leave for the generation to come? What do they want? What are their hopes and dreams? I listen to them. I want to hear what young people have to say. I want to hear what they think their community should look like in 10, 15, 20 years when they are taking over the leadership roles that my peers and I are in right now. And I want to make sure they’re prepared and that we are responsive to their needs.”

Balanoff sees a distinction between views and values: “I represent the Jewish community’s values. I try to live those values which I think are Jewish values and probably human values. I think values are more important than anything. What do you really believe in? What’s really important to you? What’s in your heart? What’s in your soul? The leadership roles that people are going to have to take on are something that’s really important.”



Sharon A. Brangman, MD

Distinguished Service Professor; Chair, Department of Geriatrics; and Director, Upstate Center of Excellence for Alzheimer’s Disease, SUNY Upstate Medical University

Sharon A. Brangman, MD, FACP, AGSF, is a Distinguished Service Professor, Chair of the Department of Geriatrics, and Director of the Upstate Center of Excellence for Alzheimer’s Disease.

Dr. Brangman received her undergraduate degree in biology from Syracuse University and her medical degree from SUNY Upstate Medical University in 1981. She is board certified in internal medicine, geriatric medicine, as well as hospice and palliative care.

As Director of the Upstate Center of Excellence for Alzheimer’s Disease, one of Dr. Brangman’s priorities is bringing greater diversity to research in the field. “A lot of the drugs that are being used now for Alzheimer’s Disease were not tested at all or very minimally tested in people who weren’t white men. In this day and age, that just defies all common sense,” she says. For the past several years, she has been working to change that. “I’m starting in Syracuse and slowly working on impact with the pharmaceutical industry. It’s a huge task, but these are the kind of things that you have to fight for when you’re taking care of people and you see that things are not equitable.”

Dr. Brangman is drawn to the InterFaith Works mission of affirming dignity, particularly as it relates to the organization’s work with seniors, including the Senior Companion Program, One to One Program, Aging Services for New Americans, and The Neighborhood Advisor Program that provides free and confidential information and assistance to help older adults stay at home and age well.

“As a geriatrician, I am very much in tune to the way our society looks at older people. That’s actually one of the reasons why I got into geriatrics. I saw that my older patients were getting marginalized. I saw the health care system was not really responding to their needs. The InterFaith Works’ mission of looking at the individual, no matter their background, really aligns to what we do in geriatrics. We don’t base things just on people’s age. We have to look at their background, their history, their other health problems, what their lifestyle issues are, what their family supports are, what their relationship is with the community, and come up with the best care plan for that person.”

Dr. Brangman not only embodies the theme of *Faith in Our Future*, she also instills it in her patients. “It’s a very important thing,” she says. “We can listen to the news and get very discouraged about where things are going. But if we don’t have that outlook and that hope, then we really take everything away from people. That’s what happens when we are dealing with people who are older. They may or may not have dementia, but aging is often a time of adjusting to a lot of different changes and you need to have that faith that things will be okay. So, what we try to do is help people understand the value of each day and that we can find the highest quality of life and we can help you get there. That’s in terms of your cognitive ability, as well as your physical ability, maintaining relationships in your community, and doing the things that you used to always enjoy doing. We try to look at that individual person and ask, ‘What matters the most to you?’ and then we help them continue what matters the most.”

Dr. Brangman has attained numerous leadership roles at the national level, being elected to the Board of the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) in 2002 and serving as chair from 2011-2012. She was also elected President of the AGS (2010-2011) and led efforts to develop their Doorway Thoughts series focused on helping health care professionals communicate and care for people from disparate ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In addition, she has served in numerous regional roles, including Director of the Central New York Alzheimer’s Disease Assistance Center and Co-Director of the New York Statewide Resource Center for Geriatric Education. Her list of accolades and awards is also impressive. Regarding the InterFaith Leadership Award, she says, “It’s a wonderful recognition for what I hope has been my leadership in trying to address the needs of aging and especially the needs of older adults with memory problems in our community.”

“We can listen to the news and get very discouraged about where things are going. But if we don’t have hope, then we really take everything away from people.”

Sharon A. Brangman, MD



“When good men and good women focus on allowing others to have the opportunity to succeed by providing them with the structures, supports and services necessary to make them successful, we are investing in the future.”

Dom Cambareri, Esq.

Dom Cambareri, Esq.

Executive Director, Syracuse Challenger Baseball

Founder and Board Member, Carrier Park Field of Dreams Athletic Complex

Dom Cambareri, Esq., is Principal Counsel for the New York State Appellate Division Fourth Department, 5th Judicial District Attorney Grievance Committee. A native of Central New York, he received his Bachelor’s Degree in political science from Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, and earned his Juris Doctor from Capital University Law School. From 1999 through 2019, he was the founding Partner and Attorney at Cambareri & Cambareri, LLP, and was in private practice for more than 32 years.

Cambareri’s professional credits pale in comparison to what he considers his true calling as the founder of and lead spokesperson for the state-of-the-art, fully handicap-accessible, integrated, multi-athletic sports complex: the \$15.8 million Carrier Park Field of Dreams Athletic Complex. Cambareri’s energies are now focused on the 2024 “Superfield of Dreams” expansion, which is designed to transform inclusive and unified sports across America under his rallying cry of “YES, you CAN play!!”

As the volunteer Executive Director of Syracuse Challenger Baseball, Cambareri oversees a sports program of more than 240 special needs children and adults between the ages of 4 and 65 on 16 teams and three divisions—Junior, Senior and Adult. He has guided the growth of Syracuse Challenger Baseball into the largest Challenger Baseball Division in the country. Of 900 eligible Challenger Divisions, Syracuse Challenger Baseball was one of only two teams selected to participate in the prestigious Little League International World Series Challenger Division Exhibit Game on Aug. 26, 2023, in Williamsport, Pa.

Cambareri was introduced to Syracuse Challenger Baseball more than 22 years ago when he was searching for a team in which his son Domenico, who has developmental and physical impairments, could play the game. “Baseball had been the center of my brothers’ and my life. I always knew that someday I would be a Little League coach, maybe coaching children of my own. I had no idea what God had in store for me. I have two amazing sons, Domenico and Antonio, and I wanted to be able to share with them my love for baseball.”

Cambareri describes himself as “a grateful servant of families and children, especially those with special needs.” He is drawn to the mission of InterFaith Works because, he says, “There are three tenets in my life that drive everything that I do: faith, family and friends. And all those concepts are consistent with the mission of InterFaith Works. What I desire to do is take the God-given talents that I have been given, step outside of myself and utilize those talents for the benefit of families and individuals with special needs and special challenges so that they can lead fulfilling, independent and focused lives of their own choosing.”

When Cambareri became the Executive Director of Syracuse Challenger Baseball in 2003, his first priority was expansion. Within two years, the league had doubled in size and was faced with a new challenge: “We had to find fields that would be all-accessible, navigable for our players, especially those in wheelchairs or who used orthotic devices.” He had to build a complex focused on accessibility and inclusion for all athletes, of all ages and all abilities. After three years of searching for a property, Cambareri teamed with the Town of DeWitt to develop the complex. In 2010, Carrier Corporation donated their 26-acre former employee recreation center as the site. In 2012, Cambareri embarked on a multi-year, multi-million dollar campaign, engaging state and local officials, charitable foundations, community focused business and corporate entities, and philanthropic individuals.

In 2016, Phase One, the Carrier Park Field of Dreams, opened with two state-of-the-art baseball/softball diamonds, gateway buildings, large parking lot, and concessions. “And we didn’t stop there,” says Cambareri. “We were focused on expanding the field so that it would be truly inclusive of every type of sport, with a special needs playground and a big enough field for all of our kids to play.”

Guided by a devout faith, Cambareri embodies this year’s InterFaith Leadership Award theme. “Faith in our future is exactly that. When good men and good women focus on allowing others to have the opportunity to succeed by providing them with the structures, supports and services necessary to make them successful, we are investing in the future and that’s what I’ve done.”



Ruth Chen, PhD

Professor of Practice, Syracuse University College of Engineering and Computer Science

Dr. Ruth Chen, Professor of Practice in the Departments of Biomedical and Chemical Engineering, and Civil and Environmental Engineering at Syracuse University, has spent her career focusing on public health and safety. She currently teaches Environmental Risk Assessment and Toxicology and engages in collaborative research, fundraising, community service, and advising students. She earned both a Doctorate in toxicology and a Master’s Degree in public health at the University of Michigan.

For Dr. Chen, *Faith in Our Future* begins with training young scientists to ensure the safety of that future: “Faith in our future means building respect and kindness among members of the community. At the same time, we need to be up to date in our field of pursuit, academic or professional. That way, we collectively build a community in terms of knowledge and productivity.”

Dr. Chen is deeply committed to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Internationalization (DEIAI) in higher education. A member of the InterFaith Works Board of Directors, she is drawn to the InterFaith Works mission because of its emphasis on “affirming dignity.” “Dignity to me means respect and kindness,” she says. “Respect other people’s point of view, background, faith, and enable a firm ground of being kind to one another. This is important because if you proactively save room in your heart or in your profession, and are accepting of other people’s point of view, then you welcome ideas that improve your research or academic field. Collectively we all benefit.”

Throughout her academic career, Dr. Chen has embraced the role of mentor to her students, often helping them to develop their professional skills and launch their careers. She is committed to encouraging underrepresented students in technology. She serves as a mentor to students in the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) at Syracuse University and engages in co-curricular activities to help international students acclimate to life in the United States.

Before moving to Syracuse, Dr. Chen taught at the Washington University of School of Engineering and Applied Science in St. Louis, Mo., where she directed both the Master’s of Engineering Program in Energy, Environmental, and Chemical Engineering, and the International Experience Program in Energy, Environmental and Chemical Engineering, a 13-month course in the study of global energy and environmental challenges. Over six years, cohorts of 20 to 30 students in the program had been to China (air pollution control for the Olympics); Korea (nanotechnology applications in engineering, medicine, and national security); India (energy and environmental challenges in India); Hong Kong (alternative energy applications in a densely populated urban environment); Brazil (biofuel synthesis and applications); and Australia (gas and coal industries, alternative energy, and water treatment).

From 1998 to 2002, she served as an epidemiologist for the Tennessee Department of Health and went on to serve as State Toxicologist/Certification Manager for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation.

When asked how she felt about receiving the InterFaith Leadership Award, Dr. Chen’s response was characteristically humble. “It is totally undeserved,” she replies, stating that she is simply doing her job. And yet her record speaks for itself.

“Faith in our future means building respect and kindness among members of the community. At the same time, we need to be up to date in our field of pursuit, academic or professional. That way, we collectively build a community in terms of knowledge and productivity.”

Ruth Chen, PhD



Anthony Davis

Superintendent, Syracuse City School District

Superintendent Anthony Davis has dedicated his professional career to the field of education. He started his work with the Syracuse City School District (SCSD) in 1986 as a Teaching Assistant and then as a Special Education Teacher before ultimately entering school administration in 1996 as an Administrative Intern at Henninger High School. In 1997, Davis accepted a leadership role in the Liverpool Central School District, where he served for almost 20 years. In that time, he provided a safe and secure educational environment along with a strong academic program for the high school's 2,300 students.

Prior to his appointment as Superintendent, Davis served as Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools. In that role, he oversaw five SCSD high schools, six SCSD middle schools, 24 Career and Technical Education Programs, four alternative programs, three K-12 Departments, two Adult Education Programs, all SCSD athletics, and more.

Davis believes that the key to a successful school district is to bring all constituents together to work toward a common goal, including students, teachers, families, and community partners. "Every voice counts. Everyone matters. And everyone has something to contribute. We in the school district want to be a part of all pieces of the community."

Davis says his main goal "is to get our students and our families to believe in themselves. The system only works when everybody is working together. Our students need to know their value first and foremost, because I think our students can demand more of everyone around them, including the adults."

Throughout his long career in the SCSD, Davis has partnered with InterFaith Works in numerous capacities, including the Community Wide Dialogues to End Racism and the Center for New Americans, which serves the refugee population. "My relationship with InterFaith Works has been a partnership, and that partnership really consists of making sure that everyone is counted in this community and that they have support. It is a pleasure and eye opening to understand the work that InterFaith Works is putting in for this community."

As a lifelong educator, Davis's professional life is a concrete expression of his *Faith in Our Future*. "I'm a man of faith. So, I take that everywhere I go. I don't push my faith upon anyone. I just try to treat them the way I want to be treated. So, for me, faith is just a part of everything I do. And, hopefully, the way I carry myself proves that, on a daily basis, I value human people, human lives, and I value the work that we do together."

In addition to his professional roles, Davis also is an active community leader. He serves as a Board member for Light of Syracuse, a non-profit organization designed to enhance the quality of life for underserved communities. He also serves as a Board member for the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority, focusing on transportation needs throughout Syracuse; as a Board of Director member for St. Joseph's College of Nursing; and as a Governing Board Member of VOICES for Youth, a non-profit organization devoted to improving the community. Previously, he served as a Board of Director member for the Southwest Community Center, and as a Co-Founder of Brother to Brother, a youth outreach program designed to pair successful and respected members of the community with troubled youth.

Davis is deeply honored to receive the InterFaith Leadership Award. "It's special," he says. "I've actually been in the audience before when other people were receiving the award, and I've always been in awe of those folks. They've done something extremely special in this community that is being recognized, and what a wonderful award that is to receive. I never imagined myself being a recipient. So, I'm extremely grateful. But, I would like to say that in education, men are not prevalent in this field, and men of color even less so. I would like to take this moment to thank those people who led before me. I got this opportunity because I saw leaders ahead of me taking advantage of opportunities given to them and seeing them do it made me know I could."

*"Every voice counts.
Everyone matters.
And everyone has something
to contribute. The system only
works when everybody is
working together."*

Anthony Davis



Sharon Owens

Deputy Mayor of Syracuse

Deputy Mayor Sharon Owens has spent her entire career serving the Syracuse community. She is a graduate of Syracuse University where she competed on the inaugural Women's Track & Field team and where she earned a place in the Orange Plus Hall of Fame. Since graduating in 1985, she has redirected her passion to compete and achieve into multiple public service organizations. Before turning her energy toward civic office in 2010, she had invested more than 20 years at the Dunbar Center, P.E.A.C.E, Inc., Jubilee Homes, and Home Headquarters. She also served as the CEO of Syracuse Community Connections and ran the Southwest Community Center. Prior to her appointment as Deputy Mayor to Ben Walsh, she worked in the administration of the former mayor, Stephanie Miner, as Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Neighborhood and Business Development.

In her current capacity, Owens serves as the mayor's Chief of Staff. In addition to her three direct reports—fire, police, and neighborhood and business development—she is involved in the city's DEI efforts, in addition to working across all the city departments.

Throughout her career she has engaged in numerous partnerships with InterFaith Works, particularly in terms of refugee resettlement and police/community relations. "I've observed InterFaith Works, over the course of my career, to focus on what benefits people in our city and in our community. In the previous administration, I worked as a Deputy Commissioner focusing on neighborhood development, so housing was a huge priority. For individuals coming to our country and community, how our new neighbors are welcomed as just that—neighbors—is critical. The relationship with InterFaith Works has been one of communication about the needs of the refugee resettlement community."

Owens also has worked closely with Bishop Colette Matthews-Carter, Director of InterFaith Works' El-Hindi Center for Dialogue & Action, to address the issue of police and community relations in the city. Owens applauds the program's "ability to work to bring stakeholders from the community and stakeholders from the police department together to talk to one another." Through these dialogue circles, participants learn to foster relationships, trust and respect. The goal is to better understand community and law enforcement perspectives. "When we asked them to really take a look at their model, the organization said 'yes' without hesitation and now they're recruiting individuals to be a part of dialogue circles that help to foster policy changes and deepen connections."

An Assistant Pastor in her church, Owens is deeply moved by the theme of *Faith in Our Future*. "Faith is a muscle. Faith doesn't grow because you just expect it to. Your faith grows through experience. You learn to believe that your impact in the community is viable and important. So, whether you are the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor of a city, whether you are the mom getting up and getting your kids to school and yourself to work, or a grandma caring for your grandkids after school, the simple act is what you're doing every day contributes to the overall health of our community. It is the hope and the faith that we have in our children and what they're going to do as they become adults that makes our community the best community on the face of the earth. It is our faith that drives us: something that makes no sense to your physical mind and body tells you that things are going to improve, and you are going to be a part of it."

Reflecting on the meaning of the InterFaith Leadership Award, Owens is humble and generous. "It means nothing about me," she says. "It means that an organization that has done so much and whose mission is dedicated to the dignity of individuals, and the growth of community, recognizes me as an individual they will align themselves with. That's huge. Not because of who I am, but because of who they are. And what they do."

"Faith is a muscle. Faith doesn't grow because you just expect it to. Your faith grows through experience. You learn to believe that your impact in the community is viable and important. Things are going to improve, and you are going to be a part of it."

Sharon Owens



Tim Saka

Board President, CNY RISE Center

Tim Saka is the Board President of CNY RISE Center, a service-oriented, non-profit organization, established by Turkish-Americans. RISE stands for Respect, Inspiration, Service and Empathy. The CNY RISE Center seeks to build relationships within communities via educational programs, interfaith events, cultural and religious programs, collaborative initiatives and community service. It was established in February 2017 by volunteers of the former Turkish Cultural Center Syracuse (TCCS). Volunteers sought to establish a new organization with a local Board that better reflected their vision and outreach into the Central New York community. The Center organizes annual “Friendship” dinners to discuss important community issues, such as childhood lead poisoning, early childcare, and the reconstruction of I81. It leads relief campaigns. It also hosts youth mentorship, interfaith activities, community cookouts, Ramadan dinners, public service award dinners and many other community-building events.

“We RISE by lifting others. The first step is to respect one another. Then we inspire each other to serve the community. Service is inspiration in action. This leads to empathy, a community in which everyone is connected.”

Tim Saka

Since Saka’s middle school years in Turkiye, he has practiced a way of Sufism called *Hizmet*, meaning Service, in Turkish. The philosophy of the *Hizmet* movement is that serving others unconditionally is the means to serving God. This was the inspiration for the motto of the CNY RISE Center, “We RISE by lifting others,” Saka says. “The first step is to *respect* one another. Then we *inspire* each other to serve the community. *Service* is inspiration in action. This leads to *empathy*, a community in which everyone is connected.”

Saka knows first-hand the power of this philosophy. As an undergraduate student in Turkiye, he met a man who would change his life. “My friends challenged me to speak to a tourist [at Ephesus] to prove my English skills,” he says. That tourist was Jeff Quiggle, a school psychologist and amateur photographer visiting Turkiye from Denver, Colo. Their 20-minute conversation and following correspondence during Saka’s undergraduate years led to a lifelong friendship. When Saka completed his degree in English teaching, Quiggle urged him to come for the summer to a U.S. English language school. He welcomed Saka into his home, sponsoring Saka’s visa, travel, housing and language school tuition. Two months turned into two years. Finally, Saka had packed his bags, ready to return to Turkiye. But, it wasn’t to be. Quiggle again generously offered to sponsor Saka’s further education—this time, a Master’s Degree in library sciences. When Saka expressed concern about paying him back, Quiggle replied, “I don’t want you to pay me back. I want you to pay it forward.” Thus, Saka’s *Hizmet* in the U.S. had begun, a life dedicated to serving the next generation through education and service. He founded and was active in numerous multicultural, interfaith, community and educational initiatives in Colorado, Utah and California before arriving in Syracuse in 2013.

Saka became a U.S. citizen in 2019. Currently he wears two hats at OCC. He is the Instructional Technologies Librarian, teaching academic research, and he is the External Coordinator for Civic Engagement. In the latter role, he serves as liaison between community agencies and OCC students to heighten their awareness of community needs and inspire ongoing service. “I like to create opportunities for people to be selfless, to help others make the community better.”

When Saka moved to Central New York, InterFaith Works was one of the first agencies he connected with. “InterFaith Works holds a special place in my heart. When I came to this community 10 years ago, I fell in love with what InterFaith Works was doing, helping underserved members of our community. It was—it is—a match for my commitment to service. We at the CNY RISE Center love our partnership with them and always seek their leadership.”

Saka is honored to receive the InterFaith Leadership Award. “It energizes and encourages me. Hundreds of people will be coming together and hearing each other’s stories of serving the community. It inspires you to ask yourself, ‘What more can I do? How can I help my community and become a leader, a voice for affirming the dignity of others?’” Service is contagious.



“Probably the most important and the biggest thing is just getting up every day and coming to work at Syracuse University and trying to get to a place that’s positively engaged in our community and welcoming to all kinds of people who want to learn.”

Chancellor Kent Syverud

Kent Syverud

Chancellor and President, Syracuse University

Chancellor Kent Syverud is the 12th Chancellor and President of Syracuse University. Now in his 10th year as Chancellor, he has worked with faculty, students, staff, trustees, and alumni to steward the University during a period of transformational change and progress. Chancellor Syverud demonstrates *Faith in Our Future* by guiding the growth of Syracuse University and its students who will become future leaders in their fields.

Chancellor Syverud was attracted to InterFaith Works shortly after moving to Syracuse with his wife, fellow honoree Dr. Ruth Chen, 10 years ago. “We worshiped in a church that was mostly refugee families from Latin America and Africa,” he says. “I learned about InterFaith Works and the great work it was doing to make Central New York welcoming to refugee families.”

The organization’s mission of affirming dignity resonated with Chancellor Syverud because of his own background. “Ruth and I are both from immigrant families and different faith traditions. We believe that this place is at its best when it is open to all kinds of people, all kinds of faiths, and enables them to be fully part of this community at work, at home and worship. I think InterFaith Works was designed to facilitate that work.”

As Chancellor of a major university, he practices faith in our future daily. “Probably the most important and the biggest thing is just getting up every day and coming to work at Syracuse University and trying to get to a place that’s positively engaged in our community and welcoming to all kinds of people who want to learn.” For the past decade, Chancellor Syverud’s commitment to academic excellence and a robust student experience has translated into physical changes that enhance the beauty and function of the campus.

A noted legal scholar and teacher, he continues to teach courses each semester in the College of Law and the Martin J. Whitman School of Management. He currently serves on the Boards of the Crouse Health system, the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and Scouting’s Longhouse Council. An elected member of the American Law Institute, Syverud’s scholarship has addressed negotiation, civil litigation, dispute resolution, and higher education. Chancellor Syverud has a Bachelor’s Degree from Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and a Law Degree and Master’s Degree in economics from the University of Michigan.

Chancellor Syverud is grateful to receive the InterFaith Leadership Award. “It’s a great honor and it’s an obligation to live up to it in the future. And living up to it means just remembering that those of us who receive this award have to make InterFaith Works proud in what we do going forward.”



InterFaith Leadership Award Honorees (1983-2023)

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1986	Dr. Ernest L. Sarason	2012	Courageous Conversations The Hon. Minna Buck Ahmad El-Hindi Dr. Louis Kriesberg Dr. Anis Obeid The Rev. Dr. Thomas Wolfe	2020/21	Democracy in Action Dan Cummings Imam Mohammed Elfiki Pastor Daren C. Jaime The Hon. Van Robinson and Linda Brown-Robinson Elaine Rubenstein The Hon. James Tormey (posthumously) The Hon. Ben Walsh
1987	Rabbi Theodore S. Levy The Rev. Dr. Jon Regier Bishop Thomas J. Costello	2013	A Lifetime of Service The Rev. Msgr. Ronald C. Bill Roslyn Bilford The Rev. Dr. Nebraski and Mrs. Fannie Carter Bob and Ruth Colvin Mike Moss Nona Stewart	2022	Resilient Leaders Dr. Casey Crabill Dr. Donna DeSiato The Hon. Helen Hudson The Hon. Ryan McMahon II Steven Sisskind Stephen J. Thomas, MD Dr. Kimberly Townsend The Rev. Phil Manuel Turner
1988	Peggy and Frank Wood	2014	New Lives, New Leaders Diana Alvarez Fuentes Hamad Haroon Om Katel Immaculee Kyondwa Muheyidin Shek Mohamoud Joseph Mpinga Hussein Musa Abdulbasit Salman Mirza Tihic Ismael Wedesso	2023	Faith in Our Future Michael Balanoff, Esq. Sharon Brangman, MD Dom Cambareri, Esq. Dr. Ruth Chen Anthony Davis Sharon Owens Tim Saka Chancellor Kent Syverud
1989	Charles Chappell, Jr.	2015	Contribution & Commitment to Community Allyn Foundation Central New York Community Foundation, Inc. The Gifford Foundation The Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York, Inc. The Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation The John Ben Snow Foundation United Way of Central New York		
1990	Mildred Eggers	2016	Radical Empathy Charlie and Beth Beach Tanweer Haq Dr. Rhea Jezer Clarence Jordan The Hon. Langston McKinney Dr. Frederick and Virginia Parker The Rev. William Redfield		
1991	The Rev. Msgr. Charles Borgognoni Jean Dougherty				
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Erwin First United Methodist Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Faith Journey United Methodist Church
Fayetteville United Methodist Church
First Baptist Church of Central Square
First Baptist Manlius
First Church of Christ, Scientist
First Congregational United Church of
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