



ALERT 2024 Albany Bridge Builders

Congratulations to our 2024 honorees being recognized for their peaceful advocacy in building strong community, police, and law enforcement relationships.

We are proud of our city and region and thank each of our recipients for making Albany stronger and safer.

Special recognition is given to our
Lifelong Community Advocates:
John Arthur Dale, Neil D. Breslin, Anne Pope,
and Benjamin and Jeanette Garland

Community Champion
Tru Heart



Law Enforcement Champion
The University at Albany Police Department



2024 Albany Bridge Builders Award Ceremony

Thank you for joining us today as we celebrate our families, friends, and neighbors of the Capital Region for their efforts in making our region better and stronger through their efforts.

Relationships around the nation, between many of our communities, police, and law enforcement agencies remain strained. In the Capital Region, through the efforts of ALERT Partnership, we are closer to having a more peaceable region.

We know that there is no one program, organization, policy, or law that is going to automatically make things better. To see lasting change, it will take individuals who make the effort; People who will be consistent during times of peace and engage in positive communication.

To experience the change our nation craves takes a determined effort by individuals who will cross the bridge and embrace a part of society that is often misunderstood.

This is what our honorees have done. Sometimes at the expense of being mocked and ridiculed by the very people they are trying to help; they kept their eyes on the goal and became a link in the chain that makes our region better.

Today, we honor residents who are change agents in our region. They build lasting community and law enforcement relationships that make Albany a stronger, safer, and better city.

Although their methods are diverse, each person that we are honoring today, encourages people within their sphere of influence to be better and live in ways that will improve all relationships.

This year, we are privileged to honor a group of thirty-four (34) individuals from all walks of life and occupations. Although different in many ways, the thing they have in common is their desire to see a strong region.

Each person as an Albany Bridge Builder is necessary for the region to be at peace and for relationships to be strengthened between law enforcement and the residents. Each of these unsung heroes labor intently.

In special recognition we honor the memory of a Lifelong Community Advocates for justice. Former Police Chief, John Arthur Dale and long-time business owners Benjamin and Jeanette Garland. Each person left a legacy for a better community and for others to follow.

We are honored to have with us today, retired Northeast Regional Director for the NAACP, Anne Pope, and Senator Neil D. Breslin. Both have served our region tirelessly and will also be recognized as Lifelong Community Advocates.

In addition, we are honoring Chief Paul Burlingame and the New York State University at Albany Police Department with our Law Enforcement Champion Award for their consistent participation in our efforts.

For our Community Champion Award, we are honoring the great community efforts of TRU Heart's, T.I.T.A.N.S. Their work in the Capital Region inspires our youth and encourages our residents to build positive bridges and "be" the peaceful people that our region needs.

I'm confident that you will agree that Albany has many Bridge Builders and Community Champions who have laid the groundwork for others to follow. We will continue seeking these individuals out and acknowledge their great efforts.

Please join the ALERT Partnership's Board of Directors, and our Task Force in congratulating our 2024 recipients of our Albany Bridge Builders award. Their tireless efforts allow our city to "Live today with hope for a stronger, safer, and more peaceful tomorrow."

Pastor David

Albany Law Enforcement Resolution Team



Founded in 2015, in response to rising tensions locally and nationally, the Albany Law Enforcement Resolution Team (ALERT) was established to serve as a liaison between the residents of Albany and the members of our police and law enforcement agencies.

Our mission is to engage our region with the hope of keeping positive dialogue open. Our desire is to build a bridge between the residents and police and law enforcement, that will bring greater peace to our city and region.

The ALERT Board of Directors and Task Force is made up of a diverse group of people representing organizations from various communities in our region. Their wisdom, insight, and assistance are critical to successful strategies and the implementation of the same.

Being event driven, throughout the year we sponsor several events that engage the community at large, organizational leaders, and specific community groups.

In addition, we receive requests from residents wanting to understand the various roles law enforcement plays in the region. They seek our guidance on how to best utilize law enforcement agencies and navigate our often complicated court system. Everyone can benefit from this partnership.

Besides our **Albany Bridge Builders** award ceremony, some interactions are:

Unite The City. This is a free event that's held in the center of our city using a carnival atmosphere of refreshments, prizes, and sports games, to engage law enforcement.

Community Leader and Law Enforcement Summit gives our community leaders access to local, state, and federal police and enforcement officials. The strength of the Summit is in the engagement that occurs between community leaders and law enforcement "after" the meeting is over.

Improving Your Quality-of-Life events bring law enforcement and community partners to our often-underserved communities, addressing often pressing issues and providing services that will improve their quality of life.

Albany Sports Challenge. In 2024, we are adding our Albany Sports Challenge event. This is designed to engage our youth and young adults, as well as whole families with our police and law enforcement partners in fun and interactive sporting ways.

ALERT is more than events and meetings. We are impacting our region one person at a time. Our hope is that the result of these combined events will be "Changed lives, more productive and understanding residents, and a stronger city."

Muhammad Abdullah



Muhammad Abdullah is a lifelong resident of Albany, a product of the Albany School system and graduate of Phillip Schuyler High School.

He is an educator, well known community advocate, activist, mentor, and motivational speaker.

He is a member of the United Front Youth Organization, and participated in many community marches to end gun violence and to restore hope to the youth.

One of his favorite quotes to every young person he encounters is, *"I love you and want to see you do good in life!"* He understands that love is the most powerful force in the universe.

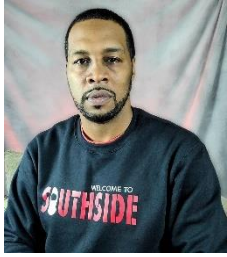
Muhammad is the President of Universal Concepts I.T.P Inc, working to build community excellence. He has coached at American Little League baseball for over 30 years, and still current through Police Athletic League [PAL].

Muhammad Abdullah has a love for humanity and building bridges to restore family morals and values.

He has attended and supported ALERT meetings and events for years. Albany is better because of the presence of Muhammad.

For these reasons and more, we are honored to recognize Muhammad Abdullah as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Michael “Beast” Alexander



Michael “Beast” Alexander, originally from Southside Queens, NY, views himself as an adopted child of Albany. When he was lost and feeling at his lowest as a teenager, Albany took him in and gave him the opportunity to make a new circle of friends and family.

He uses Youth Basketball Training and his Women's Fitness Class as a way to serve the community.

Michael’s desire to shine light on the creative, active, positive, and beautiful people of the 518 is apparent through his many media platforms. His background in modeling, art, photography, sports, and music, equips him with the ability to cross into many different fields and makes it impossible to place him in a box.

With New York State Trooper, Bobbie Murray-Alexander, [a previous Award honoree] as his wife, bridging the gap between community and law enforcement starts at home for him.

Beast states *“Understanding that much of the disconnect between the community and police is based on a lack of familiarity. Being proactive in putting both sides in the same room in non-confrontational situations is an amazing step towards creating that connection.”*

For these reasons and more, we honor Michael “Beast” Alexander as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

To stay in tune with all that Beast has going on make sure to follow him on all his social media platforms:

IG: @NyceDaBeast149

YouTube: @Nyce_DaBeast

Facebook: Michael A. Alexander

Major Robert B. Appleton



Major Robert B. Appleton has served the New York State Police for over 27 years. He has experience in law enforcement operations and tactics, organizational diagnosis and interventions, criminal and internal investigations, design and facilitation of large-scale events and seminars, and leadership development activities.

He has served almost 11 years as a Commissioned Officer in various roles including: Professional Standards Bureau, NYS Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Commander, Troop F Zone 3 Commander, and Troop G Uniform and BCI assignments.

Major Appleton is currently assigned as the detail commander and Director of Aviation. He is responsible for the leadership and supervision of approximately 70 personnel, and 22 aircraft assigned to 4 different stations statewide.

In addition, he has almost 15 years of graduate level teaching experience as an Adjunct Professor for Marist College in the School of Management. Major Appleton earned a bachelor's degree in environmental engineering from Norwich University, The Military College of Vermont, and has a master's degree in public administration from Marist College.

Featured in the 2021 official music video for George Strait called "*the Weight of the Badge*", he, his family, and his father, who also served in the Massachusetts State Police, are interviewed.

He has been married to his wife, Randi, for almost 23 years and has 3 boys, two still attending college.

He has been a strong advocate for the mission of ALERT and has assisted us with his wisdom and participation whenever he is called upon.

For these reasons and more, ALERT is honored to recognize Major Robert Appleton as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder

Bob Belber



Bob Belber has been the General Manager of the MVP Arena, formerly known as the Times Union Center, for over twenty-nine (29) years.

In 2022, the ASM Global staff and Bob generated the highest net operating profits at MVP Arena since the facility opened in 1990. Bob oversees more than 600 full and part time employees at the Albany arena.

Mr. Belber's background reflects significant achievements in the live entertainment and facility management industry. In his role as Regional General Manager, he was heavily involved with the business community, has served on several boards, and was named the 2016 Business Executive of the Year by the Capital Region Business Review.

His outstanding relationships within the NCAA, with Sports Leagues, and with the Concert Industry agencies, greatly assisted in his roles for SMG as the Director of Booking – US, and as the Director of Booking – Northeast Region. In these positions, he oversaw all sports and live entertainment that was being routed into thirteen arenas throughout the Northeast Region of the US and Canada... all while continuing to manage and operate the Times Union Center.

Under his leadership, for over 27 years the TU Center generated an average annual operating profit of over one (1) million dollars when most arenas in secondary markets were breaking even or losing money.

Bob thanks County Executive, Dan McCoy, and the Albany County Legislature, for their vision. Because of that the MVP Arena will continue to attract world class entertainment and fans will be happy to attend the events in this beautiful newly renovated building.

Among Bob Belber's achievements are:

- 1997, 1999, 2000, - SMG General Manager of the Year Award
- 1999 - Hospitality Excellence Award - Albany County Convention Visitors Bureau
- 2003 - Marketing Executive Citizen Award - NY Eastern Marketing Association
- 2016 - Business Executive of the Year - Albany Business Review

During the civil unrest in Albany in 2020, Bob opened the doors to the arena to host ALERT'S law enforcement and community leader meeting so we could determine what we could do together to make relationships stronger.

For these reasons and more, we honor Bob Belber as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Juliana Blake



Miss Juliana Blake is one of our 2024 Youth Bridge Builder Award recipients. She lives with her parents Cynthia and Terance Blake and has two (2) younger siblings, Evangeline and Alexander.

She is currently a senior at Albany High School and at the time of this printing, is narrowing her college options.

At Albany High, Juliana has consistently been on the honor roll for her academics. She is in the Wind and Jazz Ensemble, the Pit Orchestra, and the Cosmetology Class.

Miss Blake has been inducted into the National Technical Honors Society [NTHS] for Career & Technical Education [CTE] students. The National Technical Honor Society is an educational non-profit with the mission of honoring, recognizing, and empowering students and teachers, in Career & Technical Education.

In addition, Juliana is in the Tri-M Music Honor Society which is the International Music Honor Society for high school students. This organization was established to recognize students for their academic and musical achievements, reward them for their accomplishments and service activities, and to inspire other students to excel at music and leadership.

As part of the Tri-M Music Honor Society, Juliana acts as liaison between faculty, administration, students, and community. Her responsibilities include overseeing chapter officers, attending all chapter meetings, and ensuring that our local chapter maintains compliance with Tri-M standards and obligations.

Miss Blake is the co-President of the Albany Marching Falcons and a member of the Varsity Lacrosse team. Juliana is a true leader that we are all proud of.

As a resident of Albany, Juliana has performed with the Albany Marching Falcons at parades including Veterans Day and Memorial Day Parades. She also performs at other events and venues around the city throughout the year.

Juliana has also provided services to the community during the Cosmetology Spa Days.

Miss Blake states, *“Seeing the positive impact I can have on my community has helped me become a better person and a greater part of my community. It has also allowed me to encourage other people to do the same.”*

For these reasons and more, ALERT is proud to honor Miss Juliana Blake as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Senator Neil D. Breslin

Lifelong Community Advocate Award



Neil David Breslin, Democrat, is currently serving as New York State Senator representing the 46th District, which consists of parts of Albany County, parts of Schenectady County and Montgomery County.

Born as one of six children, Neil is a lifelong resident of Albany. On academic scholarship, Neil attended Fordham College from which he graduated with a BS degree in Political Science. While in law school at the University of Toledo, he was named the editor-in-chief of the Law Review. Upon graduation from law school, Neil became an associate in the firm of Garry, Cahill & Edmunds. Two years later became a partner in a new firm entitled Garry, Cahill, Edmunds & Breslin. In 1981, Neil formed a partnership with his two brothers, Michael and Thomas. Currently, Neil practices law as “of counsel” to the firm of Barclay Damon, LLP.

Neil has been a community leader for many years. His involvement in civic and social areas in Albany includes 15 years as a board member of Arbor House, a residence facility for women in need. He also served as president of Arbor House for a period of seven years. Neil has been the attorney for St. Anne’s Institute in Albany and has performed work for Hospitality House, the International Center and Hope House, a drug treatment facility. Further, Neil was Vice President of the Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless from 1994 to 1998.

An active member of the New York State Bar Association, Neil has served as a lecturer on real estate law; editor of the newsletter of the New York State Bar Association General Practice of Law Section from 1980-1984; member of the Executive Committee of the General Practice of Law Section from 1980-1985 and from 1989-1998; chairperson of the General Practice of Law Section from 1993-1994; and member of the House of Delegates of the New York State Bar Association from 1992-1994. Additionally, he has been a member of the Character and Fitness Committee of the Appellate Division, Third Department and was also chairman of the Grievance Committee for the Albany County Bar Association from 1985-1993.

Neil currently serves as Co-Chair of the Legislative Ethics Commission and is a member of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. Neil is the former and longest serving President of the National Conference of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL) and former Chair of NCOIL’s Special Committee on Race in Insurance Underwriting.

He is the former Chair of the State/Federal Relations Committee. In recognition of his dedication and commitment, Senator Breslin has received awards from numerous organizations including the Environmental Planning Lobby, Capital Area Council of Churches, the Legal Project, the Homeless Action Committee, Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood, Caregivers Respite Services of Catholic Charities, University at Albany's Presidential Honors Society, New York State Bar Association, American Civil Liberties Union, KidsPeace National Centers, Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy (Distinguished Public Service Award) and Robert F. Kennedy Democratic Club (Profiles in Courage Award).

In addition, in 2009, Mr. Breslin was the recipient of the Pathways of Hope Award given by the Clearview Center, the Advocacy Award given by the International Center of the Capital Region, the Community Service Award from Centro Civico Hispanoamericano; and was honored by the Capital District Area Labor Federation for years of service to the labor movement and working families. He was also the recipient of the 2012 "Voice of Progress Award" given by the RFK Democratic Club and in 2013, he received the "Person of the Year Award" given by the Troy Youth Association.

In 2014, he received the Distinguished Leadership Award given by the Autism Society of the Greater Capital Region. In 2015, he was named a Champion in Compassion, an award given by the Homeless and Travelers Aid Society. In 2017, he received the Centennial Medallion from Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany as well as the CWA Solidarity Award. In 2018, he received the Humanitarian Award from Living Resources. In 2019, he received the 2019 Public Service Award from the Insurance Federation of New York.

In 2020, he received the Legislator of the Year Award from the NYS Society of Orthopaedic Surgeons. In 2021, he received the John Dunne Champion of Justice Award from Prisoners' Legal Services. He received the Jim Perry Progressive Leadership Award from Citizen Action of New York in 2022. In 2023, he received the UAlbany Medallion Award and most recently, he received the Legislative Champion Award from Donate Life NYS.

Standing Committee Assignments: Chair of Insurance; Chair of Ethics and Internal Governance; Finance; Higher Education; Judiciary; Rules. (9/23)

Truly an advocate for justice on so many fronts and ALERT is honored to recognize Senator Neil David Breslin as one of our 2024 Lifelong Community Advocate Award recipients.

John Arthur Dale

Lifelong Community Advocate Award



John Arthur Dale was born September 30, 1934, in Indianapolis, Indiana to the late Arthur and Ular Mae Dale. His parents relocated to Albany, New York and John was educated through the Albany Public School System. He attended the former Philip Schuyler High School.

John joined the United States Marines Corp serving in the Korean War where he received many honors and citations for his service to his country, including a Purple Heart.

He is a graduate of the College of Saint Rose where he earned a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and Behavioral Science.

In 1956 John married his childhood sweetheart, Delores Conway. To that union two sons were born, Michael Anthony Dale and John Allen Dale.

Mr. Dale began his law enforcement career as a Patrol Officer with the Albany Police Department on August 11, 1958. He worked himself up through the ranks holding several investigative and supervisory positions within the Police Department.

He was a great leader with determination and know how as he became the Albany Police Department's first Black Sergeant.

His "firsts" didn't stop there as he later became Albany Police Department's first Black Detective, Black Lieutenant, Black Captain, Black Deputy Chief, Black Assistant Chief and ultimately Albany Police Department's first Black Chief of Police.

As a Detective Sergeant in 1970, Chief Dale was instrumental in the development of what was the Police Department's Community Review Board, later to become the Community Relations Unit.

On November 3, 1989, John was appointed to the position of Police Chief by the late Mayor of the City of Albany, Thomas Whalen.

Prior to the appointment to Chief, Mr. Dale served as Deputy Chief and Chief of Operations. Throughout his tenure, Chief Dale worked extensively with the youth and senior citizens of our city.

Chief Dale received many awards, citations, and proclamations.

- 1970 Chief Dale was the recipient of the Optimist International Law Enforcement Award for distinguished and dedicated service
- 1981 he received the Kiwanis Club Policeman of the Year Award
- 1984 the Temple- Beth-El Community Service Award
- 1984, he received the State University of New York's Martin Luther King Jr. Distinguished Community Service Award
- 1990, the Urban League Community Service Award

He also served as Chairman on the Albany LaSalle School Board and was a "regular" on Saturday mornings with other former city officials at Jack's Diner on Central Avenue.

"Chief" John Arthur Dale was a mentor, a true inspiration to the community of Albany, an exceptional leader to all regardless of their race and he was definitely a friend to many.

Mr. Dale left us many years ago, however the impact he left and made on our city lives on. He was a true trailblazer.

For these reasons and more, we honor Chief John Arthur Dale as a 2024 Lifelong Community Advocate Award Recipient.

Chiquita D'Arbeau



Chiquita D'Arbeau is originally from Mount Vernon, New York and has deep roots in the Capital District where she grew up.

Family is at the heart of Ms. D'Arbeau's life. She treasures every moment with them, especially with her adult children. Apart from her family, she finds joy in helping others, exploring fashion, and enjoying music. Her faith and the support of positive individuals strengthen her resolve and courage.

With a career spanning over twenty-seven (27) years in the Public Housing sector, Ms. D'Arbeau has gained extensive experience. She has served with distinction at esteemed institutions such as the St. Paul Housing Authority and the Minneapolis Housing Authority.

Since 1999, Chiquita has been a vital part of the Albany Housing Authority (AHA), holding various key positions. Notably, she served as the Deputy Director, overseeing various departments within AHA.

In July 2020, Ms. D'Arbeau assumed the role of Executive Director at the Albany Housing Authority, highlighting her commitment to providing quality housing solutions for all residents.

Ms. D'Arbeau holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Community and Human Services, specializing in Human Resource. Additionally, she obtained Executive Director Certification through Rutgers University and the Public Housing Directors Association Program. She has also received multiple Industry Certifications.

She is an active member of esteemed associations including the Capital Region Human Resource Association and the Society of Human Resource Management. Additionally, she serves as the Co-Chair of the Albany County Coalition on Homelessness and is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Recognized for her outstanding contributions, Ms. D'Arbeau has received the Black and Latino Achievers Award, the SUNY Empire State College Community Service Award, and several other acknowledgements throughout her career.

Chiquita states, *"As we navigate the journey of life, we must always carry the torch of humility and uplift those around us. Remaining humble is not a sign of weakness but a testament to our strength of character. In our successes, never forget the contributions of others and acknowledge the collective effort that propels us forward."*

Ms. D'Arbeau's dedication to community service shines through her collaborations with numerous community-based organizations and industry leaders.

She has been an important part of ALERT for several years. She serves on our Task Force and has been instrumental in assisting with our Unite The City event, Community Leader and Law Enforcement Summits, and is part of the planning team for our upcoming Albany Sports Challenge.

For these reasons and more, ALERT is honored to recognize Chiquita D'Arbeau for her contribution to Albany as an Albany Bridge Builder.

Jared Duffy



Acting Staff Inspector Jared Duffy was recently the New York State Police [NYSP] Zone Commander for Troop G, Zone one (1), and was responsible for NYSP Uniform Patrol in Albany and Rensselaer Counties.

Staff Inspector Duffy has been in the Capital Region since 2016 and has held several positions within the NY State Troopers throughout New York State.

He was a State Trooper for four (4) years; an Investigator in the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) for five (5) years; a Sergeant for five (5) years, and a Lieutenant for five years (5).

He was recently Administrative Captain in Troop G, State Police Headquarters in Latham and previously held the position of Leadership and Professional Development Captain.

Aside from assisting with ALERT Partnership, Jared Duffy partners with the New York State Police Trooper Foundation for projects, and is very active with the Trina and Friends K9 Rescue organization. He states that: *“Engagement with the community is extremely important for law enforcement and it is one of his top priorities.”*

Staff Inspector Duffy has over two (2) decades of dedicated service in the New York State Police, and he exemplifies outstanding leadership in community policing. His commitment to fostering positive relationships, ensuring public safety, and enhancing community well-being, makes him a prime candidate for this award.

For these reasons and more, we honor Acting Staff Inspector Jared Duffy as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Terrance E. Dunlap



Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) Terrance Dunlap entered Law Enforcement in 1995 with the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Police Department. After four years (1999) he entered the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

The mission of the DEA is to ensure the safety and health of American communities by combating criminal drug networks bringing harm, violence, overdoses, and poisonings to the United States. With the increase of Fentanyl deaths around the country and in our region, the work of Terrance and the DEA is more important than ever.

As a Special Agent (SA), Mr. Dunlap has been assigned to the Capital District Drug Task Force – Group D-52 and to the DEA Enforcement Group – D-51. While a member of these groups, he jointly worked with members of Albany’s local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies helping dismantle both large and small drug organizations.

In 2000, ASAC Dunlap was assigned to the Albany District Office. DEA – Albany, serves as one of twenty-one (21) DEA District Offices and coordinates the activities of the Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse DEA offices.

In 2018 – Terrance Dunlap was promoted to Group Supervisor (GS). As GS, I oversee the daily enforcement activities of members of the DEA and local Task Force Officers assigned to DEA.

On January 28, 2024, Terrance was promoted to the Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) of Division 50. This consists of the Syracuse Resident Office, Plattsburg Resident office and Albany District Office.

ASAC Dunlap has worked with ALERT since 2020 and has been a great support of our efforts at community meetings and events. His wisdom is evident and the assistance he gives is truly appreciated.

For these reasons and more, we are honored to recognize ASAC Terrance E. Dunlap as an Albany Bridge Builder.

Carla B. Freedman



Carla B. Freedman is the United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York. She was nominated by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. on August 10, 2021, and confirmed by the Senate on October 5, 2021. She was sworn in on October 8, 2021. Ms. Freedman is the first woman to be confirmed for this position.

Ms. Freedman is Chair of the Controlled Substances Subcommittee of the Attorney General's Advisory Committee (AGAC). Ms. Freedman is also a member of the AGAC's Violent and Organized Crime Subcommittee and Border and Immigration Subcommittee.

Ms. Freedman previously served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Syracuse office of the Northern District of New York from 2007 through 2021. She was a Supervisory Assistant U.S. Attorney and the Narcotics Chief from February 2018 through 2021. She also served as Deputy Narcotics Chief from 2016 through 2018.

Before joining the U.S. Attorney's Office, Ms. Freedman was an Assistant District Attorney in the Manhattan District Attorney's Office for 16 years. She was the Chief of the Asian Gang Unit from 1997 through 2004.

Ms. Freedman has prosecuted a wide array of crimes and offenses during her career with a focus on organized crime, violent crime, and drug trafficking offenses including, since 2009, illegal distribution of controlled substance analogues and newly scheduled synthetic drugs.

Ms. Freedman earned her law degree from New York Law School, and her undergraduate degree from Syracuse University.

Since her appointment to the US Attorney, NDNY, Carla has been an avid supporter of ALERT'S community engagement efforts. She has ensured that the foundation that was in place by her predecessor and her current team, remained strong while building an even stronger bridge between the community and her office.

For these reasons and more, we honor US Attorney Carla Freedman as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Benjamin and Jeanette Garland Lifelong Community Advocate Award



Benjamin and Jeannette Garland selflessly worked together and spent a lifetime of giving to others and improving the quality of life for the African American community.

They believed that through their community activism and their commitment to advancing, advocating for, and highlighting issues faced by the African American Community, the entire City of Albany would be better.

Most notably, Benjamin and Jeanette operated Garland Brothers Funeral Home, continuing it's over 95 year legacy of providing service that was second to none in the City of Albany, especially in the African American Community.

In 1969, Benjamin became the Owner-Operator of the Albany Branch of Garland Brothers Funeral Homes on Clinton Ave in Arbor Hill. It is the oldest minority, family-owned and operated business in the Northeastern Region. There, Benjamin provided care, sympathy, and solace to generations after the loss of their loved ones.

Together, Mr. & Mrs. Garland created a legacy that was grounded in providing meaningful, appropriate, and affordable services to African American families at times when they were deeply needed.

In addition to her responsibilities at their business, Jeanette also had a passion to support and uplift the youth of Albany. She served as the Director of the Creighton Storey Teen Center (the Rec) for the Albany Parks and Recreation Department. She retired after 22 years of meritorious service.

Benjamin and Jeanette, together and independently, volunteered for numerous civic and charitable community-based initiatives for the betterment of the African American experience in the Capital Region. They helped Reverend Odell Surgick, Reverend William Roland, and Reverend Beresford Bailey, secure scholarships for inner-city youth to attend Camp Thatcher.

Benjamin was a Board Member of the Urban League of Albany, New York, Board Member of the Albany N.A.A.C.P., Board Member of the Arbor Hill Community Development Corp., Alternate Delegate for President Jimmy Carter's Campaign of Albany County, and the First African American to run for the City of Albany's School District Board endorsed by the Albany Democratic Committee.

Jeanette participated in the beautification of the City of Albany Initiative in collaboration with Mrs. Erastus Corning and Sara Logan. She was a founding member of the inner-city coalition for the Albany County Democratic Party Committee.

Additionally, Jeanette volunteered at the Albany Girls Club Inc., The Grandmothers for Charter Schools, and was a member and historian of the MC Lawton Civic & Cultural Club, Inc. Both Benjamin and Jeanette canvassed for the opening of Green Tech High Charter School for Boys. Benjamin earned honorary membership of the basketball team.

Jeanette and Benjamin have received many accolades for their lifetime of service, including, **Jeanette:**

- The Women of Color Cancer Support group, (Caregiver award)
- The South End (Community award)
- The Frank Chapman Memorial Institute Inc. Mothers of Pearl award,
- The Albany City Common Council Black History Award, presented by Corey Ellis
- Women of Color Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Award, presented by Michael Logan

Benjamin:

- The Minority Entrepreneur of the Year
- African American Business Award from the Albany School of Humanities
- Lifetime Achievement Awards, recognition from Mayor Thomas Whalen
- ...and much more

Together, they were awarded the Black Family Community Award by the Albany Links and has a block of Clinton Avenue named at Ten Broeck Street, in their honor.

By dedicating their lives to support, love, & advocacy, Benjamin and Jeanette leaves a legacy and impact that will live on.

Jeanette entered into eternal rest on May 29, 2021. Benjamin entered into eternal rest on October 11, 2023.

For these reasons and more, ALERT is proud to honor Benjamin and Jeanette Garland with our 2024 Lifetime Community Advocate award.

Steven Grassmann



Lieutenant Steven Grassmann has served the UAlbany community since 2004. He consistently expresses an ongoing commitment to community engagement.

He currently serves as the Community Response Unit Supervisor where he oversees community outreach and programming. Steve also ensures that his unit members receive the most up-to-date training in topics related to de-escalation techniques, and crisis and trauma response.

Lieutenant Grassmann does not just serve in an administrative capacity; he frequently engages with community members on calls for service and at events throughout the year.

He helps to instruct personal safety courses on and off-campus, and every year he helps to coordinate and oversee the Capital Region Ride for missing children, which is a one-hundred-mile bicycle ride that aims to bring awareness to missing and exploited children across the United States.

Steve Grassmann regularly receives compliments from the public and community organizations. This indicates that Steve has gone above and beyond his job description, whether it is to help rectify an issue or just make people feel safe.

Steve is a good example of the empathetic and positive approaches that Community Response Unit [CRU] members, and the University Police Department members in general, display in their day-to-day interactions.

It is for these reasons and many more, that Lieutenant Steven Grassmann of the New York State University Police at Albany is an ALERT Community Bridge Builders recipient.

Joseph Guice



Deputy Sheriff Joseph Guice has worked for the Albany County Sheriff's Office [AC SO] for over 24 years and is currently assigned to the Civil Unit.

He is a Team Leader for the Search and Rescue Team; a member of the Albany County Sheriff's Office Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) program, and is a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Drone Pilot.

Deputy Guice also serves as the Project Lifesaver Coordinator for the AC Sheriff's Office. The Project Lifesaver Program is an FM Radio Frequency tracking program that helps keep vulnerable individuals living with Alzheimer's, Dementia, Autism, Down Syndrome, and traumatic brain injury, safe at home.

Deputy Guice has not only saved lives in real time, but has also inspired members in the community to prioritize the well-being of those in need.

For these reasons and more, we honor Deputy Sheriff Joseph Guice as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Amanda Hay



Amanda Hay began serving as Public Affairs Specialist for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives, (ATF) NY Field Division in May 2022.

In this capacity, she is responsible for internal and external communications to help facilitate understanding of the ATF mission including managing digital platforms, building relationships throughout NYS by engaging with media, elected officials, agency partners & community and faith leaders.

Amanda started her career as a Public Affairs Specialist in the U.S. Marines. While in uniform, she managed and implemented communications, media relations, community outreach and recruiting programs at Camp Pendleton and for the NYC Metropolitan area for Marine Corps Recruiting.

Ms. Hay worked in the private sector building public relations experience by working at Wall Street Services and for ABC Television. She returned to the government to serve as Public Affairs representative for Army Recruiting and US Army Garrison Fort Hamilton. There she managed crisis management programs, legislative affairs, protocol, social media, and community engagement.

She earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Science/Women's Studies from State University of NY at Purchase. She is a graduate of One Spirit Interfaith Seminary and is currently studying to be a meditation teacher at Kadampa Buddhist Center in NY.

Among her accomplishments, Amanda has volunteered for twelve (12) years with A More Perfect Union and is a volunteer and co-team leader for Odyssey House in Harlem, NY, which is a nonprofit empowerment group for women-at-risk. She has also provided volunteer services abroad with Cross Cultural Solutions at an orphanage in Ghana, and a Daycare Center in Dharamsala, India.

In 2023, Amanda inquired about ALERT and after discussions, she introduced us to her superiors who attended and played a significant part in our Community Leader and Law Enforcement Summit.

For these reasons and more, we honor Amanda Hay as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Marshay Hines



Marshay Hines is a native from the South End of Albany. She received her K-12 education within Albany City School district, as a student-athlete. She is the youngest of four siblings, who all have assisted with creating the person she is today.

As a youth and young adult, she was a Sponsor-A-Scholar participant, a Boys and Girls Club kid, Albany Lady Knicks AAU basketball athlete, a Albany Lady Jr. Falcon/Lady Falcons basketball player, as well as a part of a host of other extracurricular activities.

She has a Bachelors in Liberal Arts, a Bachelors in Adolescent Education Grades 7-12, and a Master of Public Administration. With a host of classroom and leadership experience, she has been in the education field for the past 11 years. In her 12th year, she is currently serving as a Middle School Principal, within a local Charter School.

With a passion for education and event planning, Marshay has created two businesses. Harlow's Way is an event planning and décor business that has provided services to local schools for the past four years.

She assists her community with creating memories for a lifetime. For the past two years, From the Blocks to the Books, have been providing services to scholars between the ages of 6-16 with tutoring in both English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Marshay is the Vice President of the Arbor Hill Sport Complex Committee, a member of the Lincoln Park Alliance Committee, a member of the NYS Department of Education SEL Reform Team, as well as a co-chairperson for the Albany County District Attorney Felony Community Divergent Group.

Even though she is committed to the growth and development of the community, her favorite role is being a mother to her daughter Harlow. She continues to teach and provide Harlow with the tools and resources to build the community and leave it better than when they found it.

Her ultimate goal is to create a space to decrease the number of youth who are considered to be the most at-risk. In the interest of all stakeholders, she will continue to be a vessel of excellence for the community through commitment and dedication to providing quality education and valuable resources.

For these reasons and more, we honor Marshay Hines as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Jamel Hood, Sr.



Jamil Lamar Hood Sr. is the father of seven beautiful children, Cedira, Jamil Jr., Jadan, Jordan, and Chene'/Michael Pettway, Nadia and Kai. Jamil has studied at Hudson Valley Community College, SAGE, and Grand Canyon University.

Jamil is currently the President/CEO of Hood's House of Hoops which is located at 340 First Street in the West Hill area of Albany, NY. Our program serves many youth/families throughout the Capital Region and beyond.

Jamil has over 25 years of work experience in the Urban Public Education System and Private Schools. During his long tenure with New Covenant Charter School and Green Tech High School for Boys he served as the school's Dean of Students. He served many roles ranging from classroom teacher, long term building substitute teacher, PE Teacher and mentor.

Jamil served as the school's Head Varsity Basketball Coach at Green Tech in which he led the school to its first New York State Championship in the first three years of its inception giving the City of Albany its first NYS Championship along with a Boys Section 2 Title and NYS Regional Champions. During his tenure as head coach his players have earned scholarship awards for their academics and athletic achievements. He has reached a milestone of 100 plus wins and a undefeated season.

Jamil has been recognized by the Black Nurses Association, Albany PAL, Frank Chapman Memorial Institute, New Covenant Charter School "Super Teacher" Award, The Leamon and Erie Grady Foundation, Dunkin Hines Classic, Capital Districts YMCA Black and Latino Achievers Award, NAACP "Jackie Robinson" Award, Green Tech HS Employee of the Year Award and Schenectady County Human Rights Commission Award.

Jamil is featured in a documentary film called "*Ballin in the Graveyard*". He is highly recognized and credited throughout many communities for his efforts to produce "change". Hood's House of Hoops offers afterschool programs, safe teen night, life skills sessions, seasonal basketball camps, trainings, mentoring, literacy, women fitness training, conflict resolution and promotes parental involvement. Currently, Hood's House of Hoops has started a worldwide program called "Full Court Peace Tour", Albany Police Department Cadet Liaison Program, Read to Lead, Sunday Men's Hoop/Vibe and Manhood Monday's.

Jamil believes that he's a servant for God's children, serving as a leader and placing HIS children and their families first. He states, "*I am not afraid to walk the tough streets or engage in serious dialogue to promote change.*" He believes that there is good in everyone, and through prayer, faith, hope, and care, we all can make a difference.

For these reasons and more, ALERT is proud to honor Jamil Hood, Sr. as an Albany Bridge Builder.

Chad Hotaling



Deputy Sheriff Chad Hotaling is a lifelong resident of the Capital District. At the age of 18, he started volunteering with his local Fire Departments, EMS service, and began dispatching for Emergency Services.

In 1993 he was hired by Albany County as one of the original 911 dispatchers which was a great pathway to my current profession in law enforcement.

Deputy Hotaling attended the Zone 14 Law Enforcement Academy at the Columbia-Greene Community College under the courtesy of Chief Frank McCabe (Village of Ravena Police Department). In 1999 I became a sworn Deputy Sheriff with the Albany County Sheriff's Office under Sheriff James Campbell.

He states that "Being a deputy is a rewarding position and he strives to hold himself to a higher standard. Interacting with the public on a daily basis allows him to build trust, which does not come easily in the current climate of law enforcement."

Deputy Sheriff Hotaling is a current member of the Technical Search & Rescue Team, the Emergency Response Team, and the Unmanned Aerial Drone (UAS) Unit.

Several years ago, Sheriff Craig Apple Sr. secured a thirty foot portable rock climbing wall. This has become a highly requested community engagement item that is utilized from spring until late fall with no fee involved. He considers himself fortunate to be one of the few agency members trained in the setup and operation of the rock wall.

Going to community events throughout the county has allowed him to interact with both our youth and adults. Some are conquering their fear of heights for the first time. Being able to reinforce safety and the ability to overcome your fears is beyond rewarding. He states that "*There's nothing quite like seeing a child smile, give you a high-five and say, 'Thank you'.*"

He looks forward to new and innovative ways to engage with the public and build trusting relationships.

For these reasons and more, we honor Deputy Sheriff Chad Hotaling as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Joshua Falk Marx



Joshua Falk Marx is a lifelong Albany resident and currently a senior at Albany High School. He has been on the Principal's List every quarter during his tenure at Albany High.

ALERT is proud of Joshua as he was inducted into the National Honor Society [NHS]. The National Honor Society empowers and equips students with the knowledge and skills to be transformative leaders in their school, community, and beyond. Scholarship recipients are selected based on their demonstration of the four pillars of the National Honor Society: Scholarship, Service, Leadership, and Character.

Joshua is a member of the boys' Varsity Tennis team at Albany High. This past Winter Break he represented Albany, New York in the USA Pan-American Maccabi games in a Tennis Tournament in Argentina. The Maccabi Games are an international athletic competition that's run much like the Olympics. Athletes can compete against other teens from all over the United States as well as delegations from Israel, Great Britain, Mexico, Canada, and more. Joshua received the Bronze Medal for his age group.

Joshua works at Retina Consultants in Slingerlands, NY, as an Ophthalmic Imaging Technician. He has been trained in CPR/AED for Adults, Children, and Infants with BLS (Basic Life Support) certification.

Joshua is off to college next academic year and has been accepted at several Universities.

In his free time, Joshua volunteers with the ALERT Organization. His passion for our mission is evident as he builds better relationships between the community and law enforcement. As part of his role, he is on the planning committee for the Albany Sports and Skills Challenge at the MVP arena.

For these reasons and more, we honor Joshua Falk Marx as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

T.J. McHugh



NY State Trooper T. J. McHugh graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 2008. He later obtained a Master's Degree in Engineering Management. After graduating from West Point, he served in the U.S. Army for 7 years as an Engineer Officer.

Upon leaving the military, Trooper McHugh pursued several job opportunities that lead him to realize that he desired a different career path... a career of public service. He entered the New York State Police Academy in 2016 and has since found this career to be everything he was looking for.

In his current assignment, he is the Troop G Recruiter, responsible for all recruiting and community engagement efforts in the ten (10) counties of Troop G and the Capital District area.

Trooper McHugh partners with community organizations, schools, and colleges, to develop relationships and showcase how the New York State Police is committed to their vision of serving, protecting, and defending the people of the State of New York.

In doing so, he ensures that the rights and dignity of everyone is preserved by developing and growing the bond between local communities and the State Police, which he says is "*Paramount in creating a better and safer future for all.*"

For these reasons and more, we honor New York State Trooper, T. J. McHugh as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Aminata Niare



Aminata Niare is a Community Prosecution Coordinator at the Community Justice Outreach Center for the Albany County District Attorney's Office.

Born in Manhattan and raised in France, her work in the community is centered on the coordination of diversion efforts with both the Felony Youth Diversion Program, and the Community Partnership Group in the DA's Office, with a focus on restorative justice.

The 2022 University at Albany Graduate was a member of the African Student Association (ASA); the Albany State University Black Alliance (ASUBA); the NAACP; and the National Congress of Black Women (NCBW). She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology and Sociology.

Her long-term goal is to be an anthropologist, which was inspired by her mother's work in a youth center, which focused on redirecting youth from juvenile detention centers. To that end, she observed an absence of such services in New York State, and decided to get involved.

For these reasons and more, we honor Aminata Niare as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Matthew Orton



Detective Matthew Orton is a lifelong resident of Saratoga County. After graduating high school at LaSalle Institute, Matthew enlisted with the Air National Guard. He served six years before being honorably discharged.

Prior to his employment with the City of Cohoes, Matthew worked for the New York State Department of Correctional Services which gave him a different perspective on the importance of communication.

Matthew was hired by the Cohoes Police Department in May 2006 as a patrolman until his assignment to the Detective Bureau in 2021. Matt specializes in narcotics and firearms crimes crediting civilian tips for the success of taking drugs and illegal guns off the streets.

As a Patrolman, Matt would personally purchase supplies to make Junior Police Badges and hand them out to children in the underserved areas of Cohoes, establishing positive relationships at a young age with this at-risk population. When the Police Department made the decision to expand its Community Resource Officer program, it was Matt who was the first to jump at the opportunity to continue to do the outreach he had already started.

As a Community Resource Officer, Matt assumed the undertaking of community events such as National Night Out; Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Rodeo; STOP DWI education at the Cohoes High School; Trunk or Treat; and the wildly popular Grinch saga. Making each event better than the last while creating new ways to involve the community.

In his most recent effort to continue providing help for the children of Cohoes, Matt became the Cohoes City School District Law Enforcement Liaison. On a daily basis, he reaches out to the school district to let them know when a student has been involved in an incident during after school hours so they can receive the assistance they need.

Matt says, *"Making connections within the community creates stronger bonds between law enforcement and the members of the community they serve. It is the joint effort put forth that will make safer and stronger communities"*.

For these reasons and more, we honor Matthew Orton as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Terry M. Parrish



Since 2015, the Albany Federal Bureau of Investigation has been an important part of ALERT.

Their presence at our meetings and events around the region have proven to strengthen community trust and relationships.

Over the years there have been several Special Agents in Charge at the Albany FBI Headquarters. Each one has been very supportive of our engagement efforts and willing to speak with and engage our residents in all communities.

This year, Special Agent, Terry Parrish has been selected as an Albany Bridge Builder Award recipient. His current service to the agency, the community in Albany and the Northern District of New York, and his prior service in other parts of the world, has earned him this recognition.

Our region country is better, safer, and stronger, because of his efforts.

For these reasons and more, we honor and congratulate Special Agent, Terry Parrish as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Anne M. Pope

Lifelong Community Advocate Award



Anne Pope is the oldest of fourteen (14) children, born in Alabama and raised in Shubuta, MS. In 1961, she migrated to Albany, New York with her two small children.

Having grown up in the segregated South she was all too familiar with racism and thought coming up North would bring about a change.

Arriving in Albany, Ms. Pope and her children stayed with her mother's oldest sister and family. Although that was a warm, welcoming environment she quickly saw the treatment of Blacks in the city was slightly different from what she experienced in the South being that it was not as noticeable in the North.

Having a spiritual upbringing, Anne joined the Union Missionary Baptist Church where she served on numerous committees and ministries with her longest position being the Director of Christian Education.

One of her favorite scriptures is "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.*" Prov. 3:5-6.

During her early years in Albany, Ms. Pope became involved in the Albany NAACP, under the suggestion of Roger Foskey, and soon became the branch secretary. She worked under several branch presidents, eventually becoming the NAACP president, and serving in that capacity for 20 years.

Under her leadership, some of the larger issues that the Albany Branch addressed were equal access to housing, affirmative action, monitoring hiring practices in local and state government, legal justice, environmental justice, and equitable education for all students. She also began an annual scholarship program for new college students, the NAACP youth council, and the ACT-SO program.

When Ms. Pope saw areas of injustice, she and her NAACP committee members would call out those inequalities. When there was mistreatment or discrimination, she would address those problems, whether it was a city, county, employment, educational, or police matter.

She later became the Northeast Regional Director for the NAACP. For nearly twenty (20) years, she was the overseer of the Albany, Schenectady, Troy and Glens Falls branches and stepped down in December of 2022.

Anne also served as Vice Chairperson on the Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott King “Lecture Series on Race and Nonviolent Social Change,” at Siena College. After twenty (20) years, in December 2022, she stepped down from that position.

Although Ms. Pope still holds her torch, she has used it to light the torches for others to carry on the work that she and so many others before her have done.

Anne leaves a lifelong legacy of voluntary servitude for the Capital Region and the State of New York.

For these reasons and more, ALERT is proud to honor Ms. Anne Pope with the 2024 Lifelong Community Advocate Award. Well done, good and faithful servant.

N. Gwen Pope



Gwen Pope is the oldest of two (2) children born to Anne Pope. She was born in Laurel, MS. and grew up in the South End of Albany.

She attended the Albany Public School's until ninth (9th) grade, when she transferred to Maryrose Academy, currently the Academy of the Holy Names.

After graduating High School her undergraduate studies began at Notre Dame College in Manchester, N.H. and ended at SUNY "Upper Division" with a B.A. degree. Upper-division classes provide advanced-level study, particularly for majors.

Continuing her education, Gwen Pope received an M.A. degree in African American Studies from S.U.N.Y.A.

After graduation, Gwen worked for the State of New York Department of Social Services, which is currently the Office of Children and Family Services, for twenty-seven (27) years.

With a passion for children, during her time there she worked in the Teenage Pregnancy Unit, Adoption Unit, and CONNECTIONS. Working with CONNECTIONS, she was responsible for obtaining business requirements for a statewide system designed to track children in both preventive and protective care.

Transferring to the NYS Homes and Community Renewal she became the Section 3 and Federal Disadvantaged Business Coordinator providing statewide training and coordinating with colleagues across the country to develop housing employment policies for (seven) 7 years before retiring from state service in 2019.

Gwen Pope is the current Vice-President of the Albany NAACP. She has been involved with the NAACP and its community activism for over thirty-five (35) years. The struggle continues and the need for more volunteers is real.

During her life Gwen has always worked with young adults. Those roles included reestablishing the:

- Albany NAACP Medical Scholarships,
- Albany NAACP ACT-SO program, and
- Albany NAACP Youth Council.

In addition, Gwen has been:

- Sunday School teacher at her church
- Albany NAACP Youth advisor
- Albany NAACP ACT-SO advisor
- Former Albany NAACP President

Gwen Pope states: *"Out of all the things I've done in my life the biggest joy was the day I became Nadja's mother."*

For these reasons and more, ALERT is proud to recognize N. Gwen Pope as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Andre J. Ray



Major Andre Ray is a graduate of the State University of NY, Plattsburgh in 2003 achieving a bachelor's degree in criminology.

He is a seventeen (17) year member of the New York State Police. During his tenure, he has served in Troop B, SP Plattsburgh; Troop F, SP Monroe; SP Catskill; Troop G, SP New Scotland; SP Princetown; SP Cobleskill; SP Fonda; and at Division Headquarters for the "Academy and Professional Standards Bureau."

Major Ray graduated from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Academy session 280 in 2021.

He is currently the Major, Troop Commander at Troop T (Thruway). Most recently, he was the Zone Commander at the State Capitol and the Acting Detail Commander of the State Police Protective Service Unit.

Andre works closely with ALERT and has given his complete support to our meetings and events and encourages engagement with the residents by everyone on his team who serves with him. We're better because of his influence and wisdom that he shares.

He resides in Guilderland and our region is fortunate to have him as an example of integrity and excellence.

For these reasons and more, we honor Major Andre Ray as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Woody J. Riboul



Officer Woody Riboul was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. He is a first generation American born to Haitian parents. His first language is Haitian Creole.

Mr. Riboul graduated from the University at Albany, earning a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology.

He joined the Albany Police Department in July of 2012. After 10 years he had the honor and privilege of joining the Department's specialized unit known as the Neighborhood Engagement Unit [NEU].

As a member of the NEU Officer Riboul stated, "I truly found my niche. I was able to give my focus and attention to issues raised by members of the community. This allowed me to build trust and maintain relationships with our youth, while fostering positive lines of communication with formal and informal leaders in the community."

In addition to his daily patrol, you can also find Officer Riboul at the Albany Police Department's Police Academy where he serves as an instructor in several areas of training. This role allows him to help mold new and future police officers.

During his time off, he enjoys maintaining his health and fitness by staying active with his daily/weekly routine workouts. He loves to travel domestically and internationally, and takes great joy in cooking an array of meals.

He is a proud and blessed husband, a father of three boys, and a mentor to fellow officers and many youth in the community.

In his daily journey to be the best version of himself, he remains thankful and humble for all the blessings God has placed in his life.

For these reasons and more, ALERT is proud to recognize Woody J. Riboul as an Albany Bridge Builder.

Benjamin Rountree



Benjamin Rountree came to a point in his life where he didn't value the law because he did not feel valued as a black man in the community.

His life's path brought him to the brink where he experienced a couple of life or death situations. Those circumstances made him look at life through a different lens.

These things led him to make changes in his life and begin advocating for positive change in the community that he is part of and serves. Serving the community has become a very valuable aspect of his life.

Today, Benjamin is a facilitator and mentor for people in the Clean Slate program, where these individuals only need someone to believe in them like Trent Griffin-Braaf did for him.

Clean Slate is an economic justice, anti-poverty, and racial justice bill that seeks to end the perpetual punishment and enable people with conviction records to access the employment, housing, education, and other opportunities they need to successfully reenter and contribute to their communities.

Benjamin has committed himself to supporting others in their journey through life and as they grow together, making the world a better place. He states, "*My story can change your life.*" This is true, as it has already changed his.

For these reasons and more, we honor Benjamin Rountree as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Rebecca Ruecker



Officer Rebecca Ruecker is an 18-year veteran of the Colonie Police Department and is highly regarded in the community for her work in our schools. She attended the University at Albany and graduated with a Bachelors in Psychology and a double minor in Criminal Justice and Business.

Rebecca attended Zone 5 regional law enforcement academy and began her career with Colonie Police Department in January of 2006.

In 2011 Officer Ruecker began in the Community Services Division. Rebecca oversees seven (7) schools throughout the North and South Colonie school districts where she is a point of contact for school safety and any other concerns. She is also a certified School Resource Officer (SRO), D.A.R.E instructor, and Car Seat technician. The D.A.R.E program is a great way for her to speak to the kids about healthy choices and to build a relationship of trust with her students.

Numerous community events are put on throughout the year to keep the unit continuously engaged with our residents. These include 5 kilometer runs, Community Nights Out, bowling, fishing, and pop up Barbeques.

Recently Ms. Ruecker has assisted homeless and mental health community members by connecting them with the resources available to meet their needs. She has partnered with the Colonie EMS Department and Albany County Department of Mental Health to explore ways to better serve our vulnerable populations, specifically the homeless and those suffering from mental illness or substance use disorders.

Colonie Police Chief James Gerace stated that Officer Ruecker, *“Has demonstrated to him and the Police Command Staff that she is ‘all in’ when it comes to helping those who are suffering.”*

Officer Ruecker is excited to continue interacting with the community in a positive way and build strong relationships. She states, *“I truly appreciate being recognized by ALERT, I enjoy my job and community and am excited to be a Bridge Builder recipient.”*

For these reasons and more, we honor Rebecca Ruecker as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Jeremy Rundell



Officer Jeremy Rundell is currently assigned to the Neighborhood Engagement Unit as a Beat Officer, for the Arbor Hill Day shift.

Officer Rundell was a Substitute Teacher at Albany High School from 2000-2004. He joined the Albany Police Department in January 2005.

In the beginning of his career, he worked Patrol in the South End for several years. In 2012, Officer Rundell was assigned to the Neighborhood Engagement Unit on the evening squad in Arbor Hill.

In September of 2020, Officer Rundell volunteered once a week for the Feed Albany program, where he would deliver meals to families that were unable to leave their house during the Pandemic because they were immunocompromised, having reduced ability to fight infections and other diseases.

He holds a Bachelor's Degree In Education from SUNY Cortland.

When not at work, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Jayden, and his three daughters, Payton (13), Amelia (12), and Liana (8).

For these reasons and more, we honor Jeremy Rundell as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Robert Sears



Robert “Bob” Sears is a law enforcement and public safety executive with over 26 years of experience in various capacities in public service.

For over 20 years, Sears served as an integral contributor to the Albany Police Department. He started his career as a police officer and retired as Acting Chief of Police, holding every rank in the department while serving various functions.

Among the programs Sears lead with the department include introducing Trauma Informed Policing standards, developing the body worn camera policy, officer health and wellness initiatives and ACES training.

Additionally, Robert Sears has served as a consultant advising State of New York agencies, local municipalities, and not-for-profit organizations on emerging law enforcement trends. He is also a NYS Law Enforcement Accreditation Assessor.

In October 2019 Sears was named Director of Public Safety for the University Heights Association [UHA] and is responsible for the Public Safety function of Albany Law School, Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and Russell Sage College. UHA employs 65 members.

Robert Sears has earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business, Management and Economics and a Master’s in Public Administration degree. He is a proud graduate of the FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminar (LEEDS) and PERF’s Senior Management Institute for Police among many other professional development opportunities.

Mr. Sears lives in Glenmont, New York with his wife Angela, his daughter Morgan and son Brady.

For these reasons and more, we honor Robert Sears as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Steven Silver



Officer Steven Silver was born in Albany and raised in the Town of Bethlehem. He was raised by his parents, Dr Steven Silver, A local Ear, Nose and Throat Doctor, and Nadine Silver, an HIV/ AIDS research Nurse.

He has a brother, who is a dog behavioral trainer in Miami, FL, a sister who is an ER nurse in Boston, Ma and a sister who is an Art Professor in Los Angeles, CA.

After graduating Bethlehem Central High School in 1998, Steve attended HVCC/ Sage Colleges of Albany with a major in Criminal Justice and a Major in Physical Education.

On June 6, 2000, Steve joined the US Coast Guard Reserves as a Gunners mate. Gunner's mates are responsible for the operation and maintenance of guided missile launching systems, gun mounts and other ordnance equipment, as well as small arms and magazines. They work with electrical and electronic circuitry; mechanical, hydraulic and pneumatic systems.

While in the Coast Guard, Steve was attached to Integrated Support Command Group Boston. There he conducted small arms training to personnel, ice breaking operations, port security, and search and rescue operations.

In 2003, he transferred into the NY Air National Guard at the 109th Airlift Wing Stratton Air National Guard Base as an Airport and Structural Firefighter, Search and Rescue Technician, and Hazardous Materials Technician.

He served in Germany, Hurricane Irene, and Superstorm Sandy. He ended his enlistment in 2015.

In 2005, Officer Steven Silver attended the Westchester County Zone 3 Police Academy where he joined the NYS University Police at Purchase College until 2007, when he transferred into the Albany Police Dept.

Steve is currently assigned to the Neighborhood Engagement Unit with West Hill Neighborhood and Central Ave. corridor as his beat.

In his off time, he enjoys spending quality time with his girlfriend Roxanne and his three children, Chloe, Julian, Stevie, and his Silver Lab - Bacardi Silver.

Steve also enjoys cycling, hiking, skydiving, house projects, and napping when he can get a break.

For these reasons and more, we honor Steve Silver as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Marcus Walthour



Marcus Walthour is a Senior Investigator with the New York State Police.

He was born and raised in Hudson, NY and graduated from the Albany Academy where he was the Captain of the football, basketball, and track teams. He pursued his higher education at Ferrum College, outside of Roanoke, Virginia, and was part of their football roster.

S. I. Walthour later received his Associates degree in Criminal Justice from Hudson Valley Community College.

He joined the State Police over 23 years ago with the hope of becoming a resource to his community and reaching back to bring other under-represented groups from the community into law enforcement.

During his career, Mr. Walthour created a community New York State Police vaccine program and a virtual reading program for elementary children in his community. He also spearheaded an annual laptop donation program where through donations, he provides laptops to under-privileged students going to college.

As an African American NY State Trooper, he states, *“I believe it is essential that we promote entry of people of all colors, ethnicities, and under-represented groups, into law enforcement by mentoring and inspiring them to become New York State Troopers.”*

Special Investigator Walthour currently resides in Hudson, NY with his wife, Holly and daughter, Harper, and enjoys golfing and snowboarding in his free time.

For these reasons and more, we honor Marcus Walthour as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Adam Zaranko



Adam Zaranko is an executive and urban planner with 17 years of public sector experience in community development, public policy, affordable housing, asset management, strategic planning, transportation planning and policy and nonprofit leadership.

Adam holds a Master's degree in Urban Planning from Columbia University, a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Design from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and an Associate's degree in Civil Engineering Technology from Hudson Valley Community College.

Adam's career and educational accomplishments are not fully captured in the things that are shared here. He has influenced the landscape of New York City and more recently in Albany County as he was instrumental in addressing the county's blight.

While in Albany, Adam spearheaded a Diversity policy bringing together community leaders, ensuring that equity in the distribution of property was maintained. The region is better because of his advocacy.

Adam recently retired from the Board of Directors of ALERT due to his new statewide position. He assisted us diligently for over five (5) years and his wisdom and insight has helped us make an impact on community and police and law enforcement relationships in our region.

For these reasons and many more, today we honor Adam Zaranko as a 2024 Albany Bridge Builder.

Community Champion Award T.I.T.A.N.S



In our Capital Region are many people that step up to help without any expectation of a reward. We call these men and women “heroes.”

Throughout the years, Albany has been fortunate to have our own Batman, AKA, Paul Collins Hackett who has advocated for peace and justice when the city has been challenged with unrest.

However, in great support roles to Batman are a group of young men and women who have unselfishly sowed good and offered help wherever needed to especially the underserved communities of Albany. These young adults are led by “Nightwing,” Khalel Hamlin, Batman’s partner in advocating for good. They are Albany’s T.I.T.A.N.S.

The T.I.T.A.N.S. are an affiliation of Tru Heart made up of a group of ten (10) young adults that are committed to peace in our city. You can find them behind their masks and unmasked as they connect with our youth throughout the city, inspiring them on to good work and excelling in education and in life.

They can be found at most community events promoting the importance of reading at the Red Bookshelf, intervening in our schools when needed and helping the underserved families of Albany during the holidays with food and Christmas gifts.

Much can be said about each of these special young adults as in their own right, they are professionals, serving organizations and businesses with their knowledge and expertise. Their individual talents include “acting; screenwriting; music; through game designing, developing life example storylines; real estate and homeownership; building generational wealth; refurbishing used books for our youth; and much more.”

Behind the masks of the T.I.T.A.N.S. are: Za’nief “Static” Washington; Abigail “Batgirl” Williams; Kadajah “Starfire” Johnson; Nyamie Bell; Keyshawn “Signal” Witters; Miasia “Raven” Morris; Briola “Donna Troy” Nugent; Salim “Beast Boy” Ismail; and Abigail “Flash” Salvadore.

They support ALERT at our events and have been instrumental in ensuring that our Unite The City and other community events are a great success.

For these reasons and more, ALERT is honored to recognize each of the T.I.T.A.N.S. as our 2024 Community Champions.

Police and Law Enforcement Champion

University at Albany Police Department Chief Paul Burlingame



The University at Albany, NY Police Department is the 2024 Police and Law Enforcement Champion for ALERT Partnership.

The police officers and staff are committed to ensuring the safety and security of students, faculty, University staff, and visitors on campus, as well as engaging our residents in the City of Albany.

Chief Paul Burlingame leads the University at Albany Police Department with integrity, a wealth of experience, and a deep commitment to serving and engaging the college and residents of Albany. He brings a 21st Century Policing approach that prioritizes engagement, collaboration, and communication. This philosophy enhances safety and security through the use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, which proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues.

The police department provides a range of services, including crime prevention, emergency response, educational workshops, and community outreach.

Among their services are:

- **Criminal Investigative Unit**
 - UPD's Criminal Investigative Unit not only investigates criminal activity and assist with prosecutions, but they also take a lead role with victim care and crime prevention.
- **Community Response Unit**
 - UPD Community Response Unit specializes in conflict resolution, assisting those in crisis or experiencing trauma, and community engagement.
- **Outreach events**
 - Whether it is setting up an event on campus, like Coffee with a Cop, or attending a job fair or ALERT event, UPD is committed to taking advantage of opportunities to have positive interactions with the community.

- **The RAD Program**
 - The RAD Systems of Self Defense courses are built on a foundation of risk awareness, risk reduction, risk avoidance and prevention. The course includes lecture, discussion, and self-defense techniques, suitable for women of all ages and abilities.
- **Active Shooter Response** and Civilian Active Shooter Response (CRASE)
 - The University Police Department continuously focuses on education, prevention, and mitigation efforts in the event of an active shooter incident on campus.
- **Citizen's Police Academy**
 - The purpose of the academy is to create better understanding and communication between the police department and the community through education.
- **Residential Life Liaison Program**
 - To ensure that the students that live on campus sees UPD as a positive resource and a partner in keeping them safe on campus, the officers are paired with staff in the living area so students see a familiar face and can feel comfortable if they need police services.

In partnership with ALERT and the Albany community, the University at Albany Police Department actively engages in various initiatives that foster positive relationships which build trust with the residents.

Chief Burlingame's leadership and the department's dedication to community policing have earned them recognition and support from students, faculty, and stakeholders alike. Together, they work towards a safer and more inclusive campus environment where everyone can thrive.

The University at Albany Police Department has fully supported the mission of ALERT Partnership and you can always find them engaging our residents at our events.

For this reason and more, ALERT is proud to honor Chief Paul Burlingame and the University at Albany Police Department.



ALERT Hall of Fame

Previous Award Honorees

Over the years, there have been many residents and police and law enforcement people and organizations that have positively impacted our region.

In an effort to keep their accomplishments and contributions in the hearts and minds of our region, once we acknowledge our residents, we proudly install each honoree into our ALERT Hall of Fame.

Congratulations to everyone!

2021

Emy Abadir
Orville Abraham
Brian Barr
Elizabeth Coombe
Dan Biette
Fred Blanchard
George Brice, Jr
Lawan Cancer
Raven Dixon
Lillian Garland
David Graham
Brian Hawley
Micky Jimenez
Amy Kowalski
Lisa MacLaughlin
Diana Mancini
Bobbie Murray - Alexander
Celinda Okwusa
Beverly Padgett
Nate Pendleton
Thomas J'Hahna

2022

Ed Baskerville
Jerome Brown
Pastor Avery L. Comithier
Arica Grimes
Paul Collins-Hackett
Kimberly Hansen
Tanya Alix-Hansen
Caren Hicks
Julia Hotmer-Drao
Corey Johnson, Jr.
Matthew Johnson
Celeste Knight
Deryl McCray
Marilyn P. Morey
Ralph Peltier
Thomas M. Praisner
Michael Prest
John Scott
Maggie Skinner
Andre M. Speller
Eric Sprague
Sheri Stevens
Daniel Vandeyar
Daniel Webster
David Zon

2022 Law Enforcement Champion Award

[Albany Police Chief, Eric Hawkins](#)
[Albany County Sheriff, Craig Apple Sr](#)

2023

Adams Kaweeda
Barrett, Ron [Cook]
Bass, Eva
Bobb-Semple, Mark
Bray, Nathaniel
Brown, J. David
Taylor Carey
deVries, Katharine
Duncan Coach Carmen

Faggins-Flores, David
Flanagan, Katie
Hamlin, Khalel
Hope, Brandon
Bishop McKinley Johnson
Kayemba, Brandon
Latimer, Octavia
Leonard, Timothy
Mabee Michael
Rich, Curtis
Robinson, Patrick “Flay”
Smalls, Jamel
Walker, Casandra
Wallace, Justin
Way, Arlene
Williams, Richard “Pancake”

2023 Special Award Recognition

Lifelong Community Advocate Award

[John T. Harris](#)
[Catherine “Cat” Jackson Hoke](#)

2023 Law Enforcement Champion Award

NY State Police Troop G Commanders, 2015 – 2023

[William Keeler](#)
[Richard J. O’Brien](#)
[Robert E. Patnaude](#)
[Dennis J. Schager](#)
[R. Christopher West](#)

2023 Community Champion Award

Harding and Mazzotti

[Paul B. Harding](#)
[Victor L. Mazzotti](#)
[Daniel P. Dagostino](#)