



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham Recognizes Community Leaders in Black History Month Commemoration

PETE HARCKHAM February 25, 2022

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*Peekskill, NY* – In recognition of Black History Month, New York State Senator Pete Harckham honored Yorktown resident Jacqueline Baker, the founder of Westchester Sickle Cell Outreach, and Scott Rhodes and Ronald Reid, co-founders of the Putnam County Community Engagement & Police Advisory Board (CEPAB), at a special virtual online ceremony.

The honorees were presented with New York State Commendation Awards for their leadership and significant commitments to bettering their communities and the lives of all of us. To see a video of the ceremony, click [here](#).

Harckham said, “Jacqueline Baker has done so much to help those with Sickle Cell Disease, and thanks to her advocacy I was able to help Westchester Medical Center procure equipment for life saving blood treatments. Scott Rhodes and Ron Reid have initiated tough and timely conversations about racial justice and police reform in an environment not always hospitable to these issues. All together, they deserve our gratitude and appreciation.”

Baker is a retired elementary school teacher who taught for 35 years in Westchester County. She is the parent of two adult sons with Sickle Cell Disease and a grandmother to an eight-year-old who has the sickle cell trait. After over 30 years of dealing with sickle cell treatment for her children, Jacqueline founded the non-profit organization Westchester Sickle Cell Outreach (WSCO) in September 2021. The organization provides various services to residents, including support groups, educational resources for holistic treatments, nutrition and cooking classes, yoga classes, meditation sessions and discussions with people who share the experience of living with Sickle Cell Disease.

Additionally, Baker is an active member of the Peekskill NAACP who has advocated for local civic engagement through her involvement with the Peekskill Chapter of the Westchester Black Women Political Caucus. Baker was named an ambassador for the 2021 Support-a-Walk, the largest annual fundraiser for Support Connection, a Yorktown-based charity that provides confidential support services and programs to people affected by breast and ovarian cancer. Ambassadors are cancer survivors who represent the spirit and purpose of the Support-A-Walk.

Scott Rhodes and Ronald Reid served as members of the Putnam County People of Color Police Reform Subcommittee, which advocated for policy changes, before co-founding the Putnam County Community Engagement & Police Advisory Board (CEPAB). The organization’s mission is to promote equity and the fair treatment of residents by law enforcement, as well as engaging youth, fostering healthy relationships and bridging the gap between underserved communities and county government and services.

Both Rhodes and Reid were instrumental in the creation of the Putnam Culture Festival, which provides a space for the community to come together and experience different cultures. Also, Rhodes helps run the Brewster Youth Football League, and Reid, a retired NYPD police officer, is a coach for the Brewster High School junior varsity football team.

Black History Month has its origins in the early twentieth century. The concept was popularized by African American academics to highlight the United States' rich African American cultural heritage.