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LIBERTY BANK PRESENTS WILLARD M. MCRAE COMMUNITY DIVERSITY AWARD TO MIKE ROHDE

MERIDEN, CT — Liberty Bank has presented Mike Rohde of Meriden with the 2019 Willard M. McRae Community Diversity Award. Rohde, a well-known community advocate and three-time Meriden mayor, received the award from bank officials at a gala reception at the Hartford Marriott in Farmington Thursday night that was attended by over 200 friends, family members, bank officials, and community leaders.

Meriden Deputy Mayor Michael Cardona presented a proclamation from the city; Commissioner Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Connecticut Department of Education, addressed the audience; and proclamations were also presented from the Office of US Senator Chris Murphy and the from the Connecticut General Assembly.

“In choosing the recipient of the award, we look not just for people who have given their time in service to community organizations, but for those who have made it their mission to make opportunities available to all,” said David Glidden, president and CEO of Liberty Bank.

Rohde has a long career of advocating for children, affordable housing and food security. His nominator, Rosa Carrero, community development officer, Liberty Bank, and Meriden resident, said, “Mike is a kind-hearted person of principle who sees the best in everyone. He continuously advocates for low- to moderate-income families, and is a staunch supporter of those who believe their voices will not be heard.”

As this year’s award recipient, Rohde was able to direct a \$5,000 charitable donation from the Liberty Bank Foundation to the nonprofit organizations of his choice. He selected the United Way of Meriden and Wallingford.

Rohde is currently director of community relations for the Community Health Center of Meriden. He is also President Meriden Farmer’s Market, where he instituted a “Doubling Dollars” program to help low-income families purchase more fresh produce; and won approval for the acceptance of SNAP benefits.

Rohde also serves on the Puerto Rican Festival Committee, and Hispanic Outreach Leaders in Action. He has also been affiliated with Connecticut Child Caring Association and the Connecticut Commission on Children

The Diversity Award is named in honor of Willard M. McRae, a past chairman and board member of Liberty Bank. It is designed to recognize an individual who has been a leader in the communities served by Liberty Bank in connecting people who are different—whether those differences are of religion, race, ethnicity, economic status, age, or any other aspect of diversity.

Established in 1825, Liberty Bank is Connecticut's oldest bank, with more than \$5.8 billion in assets and 60 banking offices throughout the central, eastern, and shoreline areas of the state. As a full-service financial institution, Liberty offers consumer and commercial banking, home mortgages, insurance, and investment services. Well known for its community reinvestment efforts, Liberty maintains a longstanding commitment to superior personal service and unparalleled community involvement. The bank is also an eight-time winner of the Hartford Courant's Top Workplace award.

(photo caption)

Meriden resident Michael Rohde accepts the 2019 Willard M. McRae Community Diversity Award from (l) Mark Gingras, board chairman, Liberty Bank; and (r) David Glidden, president and CEO, Liberty Bank.

Recipients of the Willard M. McRae Community Diversity Award

- 2018** **Chandler J. Howard**, Farmington
President & CEO, Liberty Bank; President Liberty Bank Foundation
- 2017** **Lottie Scott**, Norwich
City of Norwich Ellis Walker Ruley Committee; Norwich Arts Center; Norwich Historical Society; Norwich NAACP; Norwich Rotary Club
- 2016** **Christopher George**, New Haven
Executive Director, Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS)
- 2015** **Maria Campos-Harlow**, Wallingford
Executive Director, Spanish Community of Wallingford
- 2014** **Sara Chaney**, New London
Product Manager, Gemma E. Moran United Way/Labor Food Center
Community volunteer and mentor
- 2013** **Teresa C. Younger**, Shelton
Executive Director, Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Past Chairperson, Girl Scouts of Connecticut
- 2012** **Elsa Nuñez, Willimantic**
President, Eastern Connecticut State University
Founder, Eastern Academic Service Center and Dual College Enrollment Initiative
- 2011** **Jacqueline Owens**, Lebanon
President, Norwich Branch NAACP
Co-Founder, Dr. Martin Luther King Luncheon and March, annual Black History Program, annual World Youth Celebration Day, and Community Kwanzaa Celebration
- 2010** **Ulysses B. Hammond**, Waterford
President, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Trust Fund
Co-Founder and Co-Chair, New London Tutoring for Success Program
Founder, Minority Student Support Program, Connecticut College
- 2009** **Willard M. McRae**, Middletown
Past chairman of the Board of Directors of Liberty Bank; founding member of the Board of Directors of the Liberty Bank Foundation; co-founder of the Middlesex Coalition for Children, the Middlesex Child and Adolescent Service System Program, and the Wesleyan University Upward Bound program
- 2008** **Alejandro Melendez-Cooper**, New London
Director of the Community Health Centers of Groton and New London
Founder of the Hispanic Alliance of Southeastern Connecticut
- 2007** **Arthur Meyers**, Middletown
Director of the Russell Library
- 2006** **Catina Caban-Owen**, Windham
Social worker, Windham Public Schools
Advocate for equal access to education and healthcare
- 2005** **Joseph Sheffey**, Uncasville
Founder of Child Adoption Resource Association, an adoption agency focusing on interracial placements
- 2004** **Lydia Brewster**, Haddam Neck
Community activist and founder of Middletown's North End Action Team
- 2003** **Ramón Ortiz**, Willimantic
Community activist and service coordinator for Village Heights Apartments
- 2002** **Jane Glover**, New London
Founder of Kenté Enterprises and former mayor of New London

2001

Claire Gaudiani, New London

Former president of Connecticut College and the New London Development Corporation