

Press Release: Rotary Club of Kalamazoo - Red Rose Citation 2025

Jun 9, 2025

By: Brian Kaufman, Chair, Red Rose Citation Committee.

******FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE******

The Rotary Club of Kalamazoo would like to announce the presentation of the 2025 Red Rose Citation to Charles Parker for his great work in mentoring and encouraging the youth of our community. The Red Rose Citation is the highest-possible accolade awarded by the Rotary Club of Kalamazoo to an individual, or couple, who have exemplified a lifetime of service above self.

Charles Parker will be honored at the regularly scheduled Rotary Club of Kalamazoo meeting on June 16th, 2025, at Milestone Senior Services, located at 918 Jasper St. in Kalamazoo, which is open to the public.

Charles is a lifelong resident of Kalamazoo. Leadership came at an early age for Charles, with him taking on the role of scout leader at age 19. Throughout his life, he hasn't shied away from what it means to be a leader, as he also took on the roles of Olympic athlete, judo instructor, head coach for a variety of children's sports teams, YMCA program leader, and much more. His dedication to those he leads has helped youth in our local community better understand what they can achieve and has molded generations to confidently chase their dreams.

From his time as an instructor to his humanitarian work to provide safe spaces for underserved children, Charles has a long history of advocacy and support. His genuine affection for the youth and parents of our community has helped him to positively impact all those who interact with him or the programs he has helped to create.

The founder of Charlie's P.L.A.C.E., a non-profit organization focused on education, athletics, and leadership skill development in the community, Charles has dedicated himself in different ways to the growth and success of the local community. The organization's name stands for Pursuing Leadership and Community Engagement, a name that reflects the great work Charles has done throughout his life. The organization helps to empower individuals to create and sustain healthy and vibrant communities, something that will have a lasting effect throughout the community far into the future.

Through his dedication of time and effort to the local community, Charles has shown others what it means to be a model citizen that cares about their local community. Beyond his time spent with youth programs and Charlie's P.L.A.C.E., Charles also helped to lead the Kalamazoo Sunrise Rotary Club, involving himself with holiday ceremonies, community non-profits with administrative support, and more. This dedication to local groups and service makes him stand out as a caring individual more than worthy of recognition.

Further, everything that Charles has contributed to has been done with a smile. A beacon of positivity and optimism, Charles has worked to bring his enthusiasm to every space that he has helped, encouraging and uplifting those around him to follow in his footsteps. Because of this and his commitment to a better Kalamazoo, we are proud to present him with this year's Rotary Red Rose Citation.

Community members who will be speaking on Charles's achievements and contributions during the ceremony include: Calvin Parker Harley, Bruce Justin, Jim McIntyre, and Honorable Alisa L. Parker-LaGrone. He was nominated by Bruce Justin, a Kalamazoo Rotary Club Member.

About the Red Rose Citation

The Rotary Club of Kalamazoo has been awarding the Red Rose Citation for outstanding service since 1945. Prior recipients include Betty Upjohn Mason, Jack Hopkins, Diether Haenicke, the Hon. Carolyn Williams, the Hon. Betty Ongley, Tim and Joy Light, Judy Joliffe, Caroline Ham, Al Heilman, Karl Sandelin, Kay Polzin, Ken Miller, Mary Tyler, Linda Brown, Bill Schma, Marian Wattles, Patyti Huiskamp, Marc Schupan, Mike Seelye, Jim and Lois Richmond and Moses Walker. The citation is presented to individuals who exemplify the Rotary's "Service above Self" philosophy. Recipients need not be a Rotarian to be nominated.

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