

JOIN US TO RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING BUSINESS LEADERS

The **Wilmington Rotary Club** invites you to the fourth annual **Leaders in Service** awards banquet at 6 p.m. Tuesday, May 13, at the UNCW Burney Center.

Each year for more than a century, the Wilmington Rotary Club has been contributing thousands of dollars and hundreds of volunteer hours to our community. This helps make New Hanover County a great place to live and work for all people. Funds raised from this event, our major fundraising effort of the year, will be used for the club's projects and grants to other community organizations in the fiscal year 2025-26.

Following the Rotary motto of Service Above Self, we are recognizing leaders of honesty and integrity who are setting an example by their good work. We asked the community for nominations, from which two independent panels of community leaders selected three outstanding individuals.

Please join us in honoring the 2025 Leaders in Service: Chip Mahan, private sector; Ben David, public sector; and Margaret Weller-Stargell, nonprofit sector.

This year, we will also present our second Legacy Award to Eugene Merritt, Jr.

Those being honored have served as leaders of local organizations and have lived lives in harmony with Rotary's Four-Way Test, with a commitment to diversity and inclusion. They truly exemplify Service Above Self.

If you have not yet registered to attend this important celebration of outstanding community leaders, banquet seats are still available. You can reserve yours online at www.leadersinservice.org.

Respectfully yours,

Paul Lawler, president
Wilmington Rotary Club

Leaders in Service

Service Above Self



Awards Banquet
6 to 9 p.m.
Tuesday, May 13
UNCW Burney Center

Order your tickets online at

www.leadersinservice.org

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Platinum, \$10,000; Gold, \$5,000; Silver, \$2,500; Friends, \$1,000.

To learn more about how Wilmington Rotary Club is using sponsor contributions to make Wilmington a better place to live, work, and raise families, see wilmingtonrotaryclub.org

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MEET the 2025 LEADERS in SERVICE



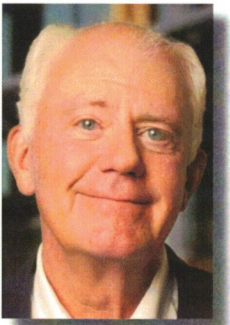
Public Sector

Ben David was district attorney for New Hanover and Pender Counties from 2004 to 2024 and now leads the new Community Justice Center, a one-stop shop for survivors of trauma. It gives crime victims and witnesses easy access to non-profits, police and prosecutors. David was a founder of the Blue Ribbon Commission on the Prevention of Youth Violence, an advocate for reforms in policing to reduce crime and incarceration rates, and supported agencies working to integrate former prison inmates back into society.



Non-Profit Sector

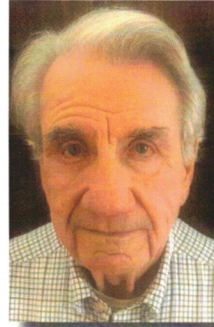
Margaret Weller-Stargell is president and CEO of Coastal Horizons Center, where she has worked since 1985. It provides health services to people dealing with addiction and substance abuse. She has served on numerous boards concerned with health care and health equity. She is also president of the Willie Stargell Foundation, named for her late husband. That organization helps patients fighting kidney disease. She has devoted her career to helping vulnerable clients regain control over their lives.



Private Sector

James S. "Chip" Mahan III, CEO of Live Oak Bank, has a record of corporate philanthropy and promotion of community involvement among his employees. Live Oak Bank's charitable foundation has awarded numerous grants to aid education, health care and human services, with a focus on workforce development, giving millions of dollars to dozens of non-profits. The bank has invested millions in affordable housing. Each year, bank employees also contribute thousands of volunteer hours and over a million dollars of their own money to regional non-profits.

LEGACY AWARD



The Wilmington Rotary Club will be presenting our second Legacy Award, created to recognize people who have made major contributions, over many years, to improving our community's quality of life.

Eugene Merritt Jr., 80, a civic activist and retired real estate developer, will receive this award on May 13.

Among his legacies are Wilmington's thriving downtown and waterfront; restaurants' legal right to sell liquor by the drink and to serve meals on waterfront decks; the preservation of downtown's northern waterfront from a threatened coal-shipping terminal; the construction of Interstate 40 between Raleigh and Wilmington; several landmark downtown buildings; and keeping a major television series' production in Wilmington.

He isn't finished. Merritt's current causes include restoring passenger rail service to Wilmington and securing historical landmark status to the century-old New Hanover High School building.

Starting in 1975, Merritt's advocacy led to creation of DARE, Inc., the present Wilmington Downtown, Inc., which he led from 1978 to 1982, a crucial period in the revitalization of the city's central business district. He was a leader in the 1978-79 campaign to reform New Hanover County's alcohol sales system, permitting restaurants to serve cocktails to their customers. He and his father, the late Eugene Merritt, Sr., were leaders in the 1981-82 fight to amend zoning laws to keep a huge coal pile off the downtown riverfront. Both also devoted years to lobbying and public pressure on state and federal officials to get the much-needed Interstate 40 built.

Gene Merritt, Jr. has lived a life that fully embraces the behaviors identified in Rotary's Four-Way Test, has devoted major time and energy to many important causes, and has left Wilmington a legacy of a half-century of service above self.

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