



News release

January 4, 2019

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**Four named as Gateway
Dr. King Humanitarians**

Gateway Technical College has named Jonathan Barker (Kenosha), Betty Brenneman (Racine), Leon Brown (Racine) and Karen Kempinen (Kenosha) as this year's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarians, individuals recognized for their contributions to society, their school, business or profession, as well as their dedication to volunteerism or philanthropic work.

The Humanitarians will be honored at Gateway's 25th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, noon, Jan. 21, in the Madrigrano Auditorium of the Conference Center on its Kenosha Campus, 3520-30th Ave.

This year's theme is "One Voice, Many Stories." Doors open at 11:30 a.m. The program will run from noon to 1:30 p.m.

Jonathan Barker

Rev. Jonathan Barker, along with Karen Kempinen, started Empower Uptown, a way to encourage the guests at the Grace Lutheran Welcome Center and other low income residents in the inner city to see the value of voting, registering and casting their ballot – many for the first time.

Rev. Barker was careful not to influence how the new registrants voted. His – and Kempinen’s – only concern was to empower those who have gone too long believing there was nothing a person impacted by poverty could do to effect political change. He has also been an energizing presence on the CUSH Homeless Task Force.

His nominator says Barker “provides support and encouragement to his congregation, to volunteers in many arenas and to the poor and homeless who come to him daily looking for a ray of hope and someone to care and value them.”

Betty Brenneman

Betty Brenneman is an active member of Coming Together Racine, a community group with a mission to actively challenge and eliminate racism in Racine. She started a weekly community book group at the public library with a focus on books related to systemic racism and is the first chairperson of the group 11-by-15. This task force is part of WISDOM, a statewide network of faith-based organizations, of which Racine Interfaith Coalition is a partner. The mission of the task force is to change and improve the criminal justice system.

Brenneman volunteers every Thursday morning at the Hospitality Center in downtown Racine and advocates for prison reform in Wisconsin.

Betty’s nominator says she “truly embodies the mission of Dr. King, not only through her commitment to racial equity, but also embodying the goals of the Poor Peoples Campaign. She understands that poverty and race are deeply connected, but to truly make changes there must be a real shift in power.”

Leon Brown

Pastor Leon Brown has worked to feed the hungry and poor and set up programs to address the needs of youth and others in Racine. He has forged partnerships with groups throughout Southeastern Wisconsin to expand his mission of feeding the hungry and poor as well as meet their spiritual and personal needs.

Pastor Brown heads up the Kingdom Manna Food Pantry – in affiliation with Feeding America – which touches the lives of more than 9,000 people monthly. The pantry gave out 2.8 million pounds of food in 2017 under his watch.

Brown helped establish the Failure Is Not An Option Inc. (F.I.N.A.O.) 501C3 organization, and the Ability Inside of Me Scholarship Award for youth. Kingdom Manna falls under the umbrella of FINAO.

Pastor Brown's nominator says "he has broken barriers of color, racism, income, and many more that have opened the doors for people to be accepted for who they are, but more importantly loving and caring on those people who know that he loves them, doesn't pass judgement on them, and will be there if needed."

Karen Kempinen

Karen Kempinen, along with Pastor Jonathan Barker, started Empower Uptown, a way to encourage the guests at the Grace Lutheran Welcome Center and other low income residents in the inner city to see the value of voting, registering and casting their ballot – many for the first time.

Kempinen was careful not to influence how the new registrants voted. Her – and Rev. Barker’s – only concern was to empower those who have gone too long believing there was nothing a person impacted by poverty could do to effect political change. They helped to remove those barriers that kept the homeless and poor from having a voice in their government and elections.

She also works with the homeless and other groups.

Kempinen’s nominator says “she is willing to invest countless hours recruiting and training up volunteers in every area she works, whether that is homeless advocacy and service or voter registration.”

Event to highlight King re-enactor, ‘power of your story’

At this year’s event, attendees will hear from presenter Kirstin Anglea about “The Power of Your Story” and from keynote speaker and Dr. King re-enactor Gregg Riley.

Dream Keepers – the winners of the Peace Mentor, Kenosha Kindness Week and Peace Maker Awards – will also be recognized at the event.

Gateway Technical College collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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