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Director@Laurelhistoricalsociety.org **Note: Detailed information on honorees on p.2 of release.**

LHS Gala “The Laurel Pop Festival 1969” Honors 3

Laurel, Maryland...Three exceptional representatives of the Laurel community will be recognized with Community Impact Awards on April 13, 2019 at the Laurel Historical Society’s Annual Gala. This year’s honorees are: Ruth Walls, Individual Community Impact Award; Side by Side, Non-Profit Community Impact Award; and McGowan and Cecil, LLC, Business Community Impact Award. In making the announcement, the LHS outlined what contributed to their selection.

Ruth Walls’ selfless advocacy for ensuring that people have housing, food, clothing, medical attention and access to non-traditional resources, to sustain their lives; makes Laurel a healthier, happier and safer place to live. Side-By-Side, serving as liaison between schools and families for the academic success of our children, and under the guidance of founder Joe Murchison, has grown to become a model of success and has served more than 2500 families over the past 12 years. McGowan and Cecil, LLC, in addition to its law practice, has demonstrated a commitment to Laurel through its redevelopment and renovation of several Main Street properties, including the former Laurel Arts Center.

“The Community Impact awards were created to honor the contributions of those in Laurel who work to foster the kind of community that the Laurel Historical Society also works to preserve and promote. These three honorees are outstanding examples of local businesses, organizations and residents who have been part of that effort, “stated Gala Chair Jhanna Levin.

The “Laurel Pop Festival 1969” gala is the organization’s largest fundraiser of the year. The theme commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Laurel Pop Festival in 1969 Festivities are being held at the Doubletree Inn at 15101 Sweitzer Lane in Laurel. Individual tickets are \$100 for LHS members/\$110 for non-members. The Community Impact Awards are sponsored by Revere Bank. Additional sponsorship and ticket information can be found at www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org.

The Laurel Historical Society is located at 817 Main Street, Laurel, Md. Its current Laurel Museum exhibit: “Is There a Doctor in the House? Laurel’s Healthcare Stories “will run through December 2019. The Laurel Museum is open Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:00am-2:00pm and Sundays 1-4:00pm Admission is free.

For John Brennan Research Library appointments, tour groups and more information contact info@Laurelhistoricalsociety.org, or 301-725-7975.

BACKGROUND ON COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD WINNERS

Ruth Walls, Individual Community Impact Award



A Laurel resident since 1984, Ruth Walls has devoted her personal life and resources toward the health, safety and overall well-being of the community's residents. A Registered Nurse (RN) with a Masters in Psychology from Loyola University and Masters in Nursing Education from Stevenson University, she also teaches Community Health Nursing Part-Time at Stevenson. In 2004 Ruth founded Patrons for Peace Project a non-profit organization committed to providing alternative types of support and creative resources to help homeless individuals and consumers of mental health services achieve and maintain a quality of life with dignity.

Community members recall how she spearheaded the Debnam House project, which transformed the living quarters of a local young man with cerebral palsy. Another project, the Peace Pole, is still visible at the City of Laurel's Memorial Garden. Ruth will be the first to note that she does not do it alone, and that there is a dedicated group of people who help her successfully deliver services and resources. However, as the LHS citation notes, it is her initiative, leadership, passion, persistence and most of all, genuine concern for others, that inspires people to give their time and resources to help. Her selfless advocacy for ensuring that people have housing, food, clothing, medical attention and access to non-traditional resources, to sustain their lives; makes Laurel a healthier, happier and safer place to live. She and her husband Michael live in Old Town Laurel.

Side by Side, Non-Profit Community Impact Award



Side by Side was founded in 2007 by former Laurel Leader editor Joe Murchison. In only 12 years Side-by-Side has had a major impact on the lives of more than 2500 families and now operates in six Prince George's County schools. Currently it is serving 437 family units. This unique organization serves as liaison between schools and families for the academic success of children and has become a critical resource for the Laurel community. Side by Side's vision inspires hands-on parent participation, community volunteerism and school/community partnership. Its Great Start workshops offer families tools that include reading, math, writing, help with behavior in school and at home, summer activities and ways to motivate positive behavior. With Laurel's growing population of Latino families, its programs assisting residents with English as a second language help families effectively navigate through our educational system. Side by Side is a proven model for success.

McGowan and Cecil, LLC, Business Impact Award



McGowan and Cecil, LLC is a law firm specializing in personal injury. Its founding partners, Mike McGowan and Robb Cecil were operating separate Laurel practices when they joined forces in 2001. Beginning their commitment to the redevelopment and revitalization of Laurel's Main Street. In 2006 as the firm they expanded they erected 319 Main Street, where their offices are currently located. After acquiring 320 Main Street, the firm recently renovated the former Laurel Art Center. The two combined buildings now house 15 businesses and more than 150 employees. McGowan and Cecil's impact commitment extends into the community, where they support a variety of organizations, including first Generation College Bound, and Laurel Advocacy and Referral and serve on a number of committees, including the City of Laurel Community Redevelopment Authority and the City of Laurel Crime Line Committee.

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