

Six Recognized for Public Service at Stockton's Hughes Center Honors

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Galloway, N.J. – The theme of the night was civility as the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University bestowed awards in recognition of the late ambassador's public service career.

The Hughes Center Honors is a biennial awards ceremony that acknowledges outstanding New Jerseyans for excellence in their field and for a commitment to public service, civility and bipartisanship. More than 150 people attended the Nov. 9 event in the Campus Center Event Room.

"The Hughes Center's mission to encourage civil civic engagement is a natural extension of Stockton's mission of developing students to be engaged and effective citizens and active participants in democracy," said Stockton President Joe Bertolino. "Today, probably more than any other time, that engagement, that civil responsibility is important. The opportunity to sit and engage in dialogue and debate in a constructive and civil manner is important."

Bill Hughes Jr. thanked the six honorees. "Thank you for what you have done, for what you will do, for the examples you have set, for living the ideals my father sought to achieve and thought to demonstrate every single day," he said.

Richard Tolson, chair of the Hughes Center Advisory Board, served as master of ceremonies for the awards, which included:

Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award

John F. Scarpa of Avalon and Palm Beach, Florida, is an entrepreneur who grew up in Vineland and established successful businesses in cable television, radio, the internet and cellular communications. He helped establish the New Jersey and the Northeast Cable TV Association and was a co-founder, president and COO of American Cellular Network Corporation. He has shared his financial success through extensive philanthropy, having established the John F. Scarpa Foundation. In 2019, he donated \$8 million to Stockton University in support of academic programs in Atlantic City and the Health Sciences program at the Galloway campus.

In accepting his award, Scarpa focused on the legacy of Ambassador Hughes. "He brought civility and bipartisanship to everything he did. Most important to him was the goal to work together for the common good," Scarpa said. "His willingness to listen, his drive to give back, are things I humbly believe in and try to lead with each and every

day. We must lead with civility, ingenuity, determination and passion to prepare our youth.”

Excellence in Civic Engagement Award

Judge Esther Salas is a District Judge who has presided over complex civil and criminal cases, including a number of issues of first impression for the District of New Jersey. Following the murder of her son, Daniel, in 2020 by an armed gunman at her home, Salas has helped pass state and federal legislation to protect judges and court personnel.

Former U.S. Attorney Craig Carpenito presented the award to Salas. “She taught me we are not prosecuting criminals. We are not prosecuting crimes. We are prosecuting people. And all people need to be looked at as individuals. Esther taught me justice is best meted out by helping people see why they got where they are.”

Salas shared how her son’s death reinforced her commitment to service. “On July 19, 2020, Daniel was murdered by a disgruntled lawyer angry with me for taking too long on a motion. But he hated me the day I was born. He hated that I was a Latina, that I was a woman. That I had the audacity to rise up the ranks as a district judge,” she said. “Because of my son’s bravery and courage, that man’s plans were foiled. It was an act of love. We can do so much when we work together, when we love each other. The theme tonight for me as we honor William J. Hughes, as we honor his legacy, is that words matter, people matter and how we treat this great earth matters.”

Civility in Government & Politics Award

Two New Jersey leaders were recognized in bipartisan fashion with this award.

Thomas P. Giblin, a Democrat, is a N.J. State Assembly member and business manager for Local 68 of the International Union of Operating Engineers. Giblin is retiring at the end of his term.

“It is no time for the faint of heart at the national level, the state level and the local level. We see a myriad of problems taking place, and it will take smart, intelligent leadership to bring us together,” he said.

Kevin O’Toole is chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Before moving to the Port Authority board in 2017, O’Toole, a Republican, had a distinguished career in elected office, serving in the N.J. State Assembly and State Senate for more than two decades.

O’Toole shared advice his mother gave him as he entered politics. “They’re not always going to love you, but you’ve got to get along. And whatever that problem is, figure it out,” he said. “The world is on fire. We reward people for fighting with one another. We can’t do that anymore. There is nothing getting done. We have to say to our leaders two things: get along, figure it out. Let’s salute the future generation. Let’s demand of them that we get along, that we figure it out.”

Excellence in Community Leadership Award

William T. Mullen is the president of the New Jersey State Building & Construction Trades Council, comprised of 15 international building trades unions and 13 county councils.

“Thank you for honoring the New Jersey State Building Trades with this award. I am the face of 150,000 men and women who work tirelessly to contribute to and develop our state,” Mullen said, before going on to acknowledge the work of the late Ambassador Hughes and the Hughes Center.

“He often reminded us, if you don’t have a seat at the table, you are the menu. He ensured South Jersey had a seat at the table and was heard. Your dedication to the noble cause of public policy is truly commendable and is a beacon of hope for all of us who believe in the power and principles of decision making,” Mullen said.

Distinctive Student Leadership Award

Emily Kramer, class of 2023, who is the Urgent Action Coordinator for Amnesty International, previously served as an intern for the Hughes Center and researched ranked-choice voting and statewide elections in the spring 2022 semester.

“I discovered passions I did not even know I had, mainly leadership and activism,” Kramer said in receiving her award. “The community at Stockton sowed the seeds for these passions. The professors, students and faculty created such a unique opportunity for people like me to grow. Without my experience at Stockton, I would not have built the confidence or skills to pursue a career in activism.”

The Hughes Center conducts research to provide better understanding of complex policy issues. It engages the Stockton community and the greater public through programming that includes panel discussions, election candidate debates, speaker events and political commentary. The center also gives voice to the people of South Jersey and all of the state through its Stockton Polling Institute.

Honors1—From left: John Froonjian, executive director, William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy; honoree Kevin J. O’Toole; Stockton President Joe Bertolino; honoree Esther Salas; honoree Thomas P. Giblin; Richard Tolson, chair of the Hughes Center Advisory Board; honoree Emily Kramer; honoree William T. Mullen; and Edward H. Salmon, Hughes Center Advisory Board Emeritus Founding Chair, at the Nov. 9 event.

Honors2—John F. Scarpa, center, received the Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award for his commitment to philanthropy at the Nov. 9 Hughes Center Honors.

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Stockton University

Stockton University is [ranked](#) among the top public universities in the nation. Our nearly 9,000 students can choose to live and learn on the 1,600-acre wooded main campus in the Pinelands National Reserve in South Jersey and at our coastal residential campus just steps from the beach and Boardwalk in Atlantic City. The university offers more than 160 undergraduate and graduate programs. Learn more at stockton.edu.