



ALABAMA

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Albert Schweitzer Fellowship of Alabama Announces Its 2023 Humanitarian of the Year Recipient

Award Recognizes Frances Ford, Perry County Health Care Coordinator for Sowing Seeds of Hope

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Birmingham, AL -- January 27, 2023 -- The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship (ASF) of Alabama announced today the recipient of its 2023 Alabama Schweitzer Humanitarian of the Year Award. Frances Ford, RN, Perry County Health Care Coordinator for the Perry County Commission, and former longtime Executive Director of Sowing Seeds of Hope, will receive this year's award in recognition of her service to the citizens of Perry County, Alabama. Ford will be recognized at the Alabama Schweitzer Fellowship's annual Celebration of Service event on April 15, 2023, at the UAB Alumni House alongside the 2022-23 Fellow Class.

Alabama Schweitzer Fellowship provides its Fellows with professional development activities that allow them to interact with influential public health leaders from throughout the state. The Humanitarian of the Year gives a keynote address to the outgoing class at each Celebration of Service, challenging the graduating Fellows to continue living up to Dr. Albert Schweitzer's legacy beyond their year of service in the Fellowship program.

Ford is being celebrated as the Humanitarian of the Year for her service to the people of Perry County spanning more than two decades. Under Ford's leadership, first as Executive Director of Sowing Seeds of Hope and now as Perry County Health Care Coordinator, Ford has worked tirelessly to improve the health, housing and concrete resources available to Perry County families including educational, economic and material support.

“Ms. Ford has been a critical part of the community, caretaking for Marion, Alabama and Perry County at large,” said Stirling Hutchins, Development Director at A+ Education Partnership and President of the Board of Directors of Alabama’s Schweitzer Fellowship. “In a community that served as a seat for the Civil Rights movement and has been often overlooked in the following years, Ms. Ford ensures that every resident has the resources and healthcare that they deserve. She is an incredible example of a leader who has brought critical resources to her community for decades and understands how equitable access to healthcare and wrap-around services are the backbone of a strong community.”

“All the candidates were amazing,” said Stacey Walters, Director of Medicare Advantage for Blue Cross and Blue Shield Alabama and ASF Board Member and Chairperson of the selection committee. “But we came to the decision by focusing on the intersection of community and healthcare as we believe this ties directly to the work of the Fellows and mission of our organization. Ms. Ford has had a direct impact in healthcare on a very underserved area of our state, which truly embodies the spirit of Alabama’s Schweitzer Fellowship.”

Sowing Seeds of Hope is a faith-based community development organization devoted to serving and supporting people in Perry County and across the Black Belt region. The organization provides health education and health screenings, hosts parenting support groups, promotes literacy and improves housing. It also distributes school supplies, eldercare products, clothing and food. It also partnered with the USDA to build homes for low income families, to renovate and overhaul existing homes and to lobby lawmakers to revise health regulations to benefit rural counties. From 2005-2022 Ford served as Executive Director, a tenure that saw her at times serve nearly half the residents of Perry County.

Ford isn’t the only one in her family to care for her community. “My grandmother was a midwife,” Ford said. “And she cared for her father and her uncle. So having an opportunity to help her with taking care of them, it just made me want to take care of people, and I thought that nursing or healthcare was the way that I can do that.” After completing a nursing degree from Samford University, she headed back to Perry County, where she was born and raised. “I love the people,” Ford says when asked why she’s stayed in her hometown all these years. “The people of Perry County are its greatest asset.”

In addition to her nursing degree, Ford holds a biology degree from Judson College. Ford is a member of both the Alabama HealthCare Hall of Fame and the Alabama Nursing Hall of Fame.

The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship (ASF) of Alabama is developing the next generation of healthcare professionals to serve and empower vulnerable people to live healthier lives and create healthier communities in Alabama. Since 2016, ASF of Alabama has trained 92 students who have partnered with over 50 community organizations to provide approximately 18,000 hours of service at a value of more than \$400,000 to Alabama’s most vulnerable groups. Nationally, more than 4,000 U.S. Schweitzer Fellows have delivered nearly 750,000 hours of service to individuals and communities in need. Through its intensive one-year Fellowship program and the ongoing work of its 4,000+ Fellow for Life alumni, ASF perpetuates the legacy of physician-humanitarian and Nobel Peace laureate Dr. Albert Schweitzer.