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• Press Release

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MEMORIAL ART GALLERY HONORS AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERS



ROCHESTER, NY — Three area residents were honored for their contributions to the community at the Memorial Art Gallery’s Black History Month Family Day on February 4. Margie Usher, Luvon Sheppard and Dr. David Anderson received the Gallery’s 2007 Pioneers in Arts and Education Awards, which recognize African Americans 65 or older. *(Pictured from left are Sheppard, Anderson and Usher.)*

Usher, 65, was recognized for her volunteer work in the Skip Generation program, a support group for grandparents raising grandchildren. Eldersource care manager Sandy Schencke, who nominated her, says that Usher not only is raising a number of her own grandchildren but has made helping others a priority. As an example, Schencke notes that Usher has helped another grandmother learn to read—an absolute necessity for navigating the court systems, dealing with school issues and homework questions, and understanding health benefits.

Sheppard, 66, is a professor of art at Rochester Institute of Technology. He was a co-founder of the Allofus Art Workshop, a visual arts center formerly operated by the Memorial Art Gallery, and a founder of the Rochester chapter of the National Conference of Artists, an organization for the preservation and promotion of African American culture. Sheppard has participated in an anti-graffiti initiative for young artists in the Baden Street neighborhood; taught poetry and visual arts at the Edgerton Park recreation center; helped found the Joy Gallery, featuring spiritually-inspired paintings and sculpture; and been an artist-teacher in the Rochester City School District. He was nominated by Paulette Davis.

Anderson, 76, is a professor at St. John Fisher College, where he teaches in the African American Studies program. As the storyteller Sankofa, he founded of the Blackstorytelling League of Rochester. He is the author of several books including *The Origin of Life on Earth: An African Creation Myth* and *Kwanzaa: An Everyday Resource and Instructional Guide* and is the recipient of the Zora Neale Hurston Award and Coretta Scott King Book Award. Anderson established the Rochester Kwanzaa Coalition in the late 1960s, chairs the Rochester-Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission and is program director of AKWAABA: The Heritage Associates. He was nominated by Delores Jackson-Radney.

Black History Month Family Day was sponsored by Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics, a Johnson & Johnson company, and the Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson Foundation, with additional support from the Rochester City School District's Office of Student Equity and Placement.