

For Immediate Release, January 22nd, 2025

6th Annual African American Environmental Pioneer Awards, February 24th, 2025

In recognition of Black History Month, the **African American Environmental Pioneer Awards** 6th annual event is honoring those in Milwaukee's African American community working for a better environment. Nominees are chosen by previous honorees and event organizers. Awardees this year consist of community leaders ranging in scope from neighborhood to county-wide impact. The ceremony is held during Black History Month to honor the rich cultural history of the African Diaspora, while celebrating our living generations of all ages for their efforts to make the world a better place through environmental stewardship. Awards are given in two categories, to recognize the intergenerational nature of community work, "Pioneers" as well as younger "Rising Stars".

This year the awards will be held at the new **Washington Park Urban Ecology Center at 1859 N. 40th Street**. Doors will open at 5:00 for networking and refreshments, and the program will begin at 6:30 pm. Performers will include **Ko-Thi African Dance Company**, and **Drummer Ojumire Charleston** of Drums up Guns Down 414. The program will have a libation ceremony performed by **Supreme Moore Omokunde** and the Black National Anthem sung by **Adekola Adedepo**. A special addition this year will be a tribute to Black Arts and the environment. The program will be broadcast as a live stream. Both online and in-person attendees are asked to RSVP for the event at this link: www.bit.ly/green_pioneers_2025

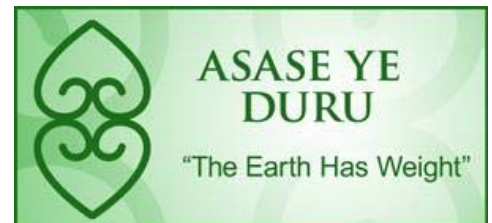
Awards will be presented to six individuals. The 2025 honorees are:

PIONEER AWARD

Nicki Espy Neighborhood House of Milwaukee

RISING STAR AWARDEES

Ladonna Green	Victory Gardens
Erin Moore	DNR Havenwoods
Kevin Patterson	Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
Julien Phifer	County Parks Community Engagement
Olivia Raasch	Urban Ecology Center



The event has adopted the Ashanti Adinkra symbol "**Asase Ye Duru**" meaning "**The Earth has Weight**", symbolizing the providence and divinity of Mother Earth.

This event is free and open to the public. Participants must register in advance at www.bit.ly/green_pioneers_2025

The inaugural event in 2020, was held at the Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum. It featured a call to ceremony by drummers from Ko-Thi African Dance Company. Brenda Coley of Milwaukee Water Commons was the featured speaker and addressed the need for society to be more inclusive in what is known as "the commons", public spaces and resources that belong to all of us. At a 2021 "all virtual" event, the keynote was pioneering Harlem poet Dahveed Nelson, a member of the Last Poets, credited for work that led to the emergence of hip-hop. In 2022, a hybrid virtual and in-person event featured Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes as Keynote. In 2023 the keynote was replaced with an intergenerational panel on Climate Justice. In 2024, the AAEPa committee presented a community "Call to Action" and the Milwaukee Environmental Justice Alliance announced their organization.

A web page featuring all the information on this year's event can be found at this link:

<https://nearbynaturemke.org/6th-annual-2025-african-american-environmental-pioneer-awards/>

This year, several organizations joined as sponsors, allowing us to hire professional AV support, hire numerous performing artists and provide food during the networking hour

2025 Event Sponsors, to date, include:

Century City Triangle Neighborhood Association
Clean Wisconsin
Elevate
Faith In Place
Friends of Lincoln Park
Fund for Lake Michigan
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
Hummingbird MKE
Land Restoration School
Midwest Environmental Advocates
Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
Milwaukee Parks Foundation
Milwaukee Water Commons
Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin
Near Westside Partners
Nearby Nature Milwaukee
Northwest Side Community Development Corp
Reflo
The Nature Conservancy
Urban Ecology Center
Wisconsin Green Fire
Wisconsin Green Muslims

The 2025 AAEP A Planning Committee includes:

- Terry Evans, Urban Ecology Center
- Timothy Scott Sr., Nearby Nature Milwaukee
- Aton Fox, Milwaukee Water Commons
- Danitra Jones, Northwest Side CDC
- Wilniesha Smith, Reflo
- Mars Patterson, Nearby Nature Milwaukee
- Makayla Cooper, Nearby Nature Milwaukee
- Jerica Fehr, Nearby Nature Milwaukee
- David Thomas, Nearby Nature Milwaukee
- Yvonne McCaskill, Century City Triangle Neighborhood Association
- Jen Abel, Sierra Club Great Waters Group

For more information or to arrange interviews, please email: AAEPA@NearbyNaturemke.org

Or Contact:

- Tim Scott, Nearby Nature Milwaukee: 414-429-7214, timscott@nearbynaturemke.org
- Terry Evans, Urban Ecology Center: 414-793-3649, tevens@urbanecologycenter.org

Other links of interest:

Facebook Event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/925465539007213>

Web Info Page: <https://nearbynaturemke.org/6th-annual-2025-african-american-environmental-pioneer-awards/>

Registration Link: www.bit.ly/green_pioneers_2025

Graphical Invitation:

