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THE SAINT PAUL & MINNESOTA FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 17th ANNUAL FACING RACE AWARD RECIPIENTS

A program celebrating the honorees will air at facingrace.org on October 12

St. Paul, Minn. – September 25, 2023 – The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation (the Foundation) is proud to announce the recipients of its 2023 Facing Race Awards, honoring four Minnesota-based anti-racism advocates who have made notable strides toward fostering a state where all communities and people thrive. The award recipients are Trahern Crews, Rayona Kardell, Rose McGee and Asha Shoffner.

Nominations for the Facing Race Awards are open to the public each year. The 2023 recipients were chosen by a selection panel made up of past Facing Race Award recipients. In addition to the award, each honoree will receive a grant for the nonprofit of their choice.

“We are excited to celebrate and hold up those in our community who are standing up against racism to make Minnesota a better place to live, work and grow,” said Eric J. Jolly, Ph.D., president and CEO. “This year’s Facing Race honorees are incredible examples of how each person’s voice can make a positive difference in our communities and across our state. I am humbled and honored to recognize their contributions.”

About the 2023 Facing Race Recipients:

Trahern Crews

Trahern Crews is the co-founder and lead organizer of [Black Lives Matter Minnesota](#) – one of the nation’s most active chapters. As a reparationist, social justice advocate and grassroots organizer, the Saint Paul native strives to make Minnesota a more equitable state.

Over the course of his career in activism, Trahern has led the [Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission](#) and worked on the Minnesota Migration Act. He has also run for public office as a member of the Green Party and is currently working with other leaders to put together a textbook on how to create social change in an effort to pass down their strategies and techniques to the next generations.

Rayona Kardell

Rayona Kardell is one of two client advocates at [Breaking Free](#), a nonprofit that assists clients who have experienced sex trafficking or sexual exploitation. She is passionate about helping her clients overcome the barriers they face and achieve the goals they’ve felt they would never reach.

“Rayona goes out of her way to bring clients food and hygiene items at their homes or treatment facilities after already putting in her eight hours for the day,” said her coworker and nominator. She has helped women, both young and old, break generational curses and find

purpose, using her life experiences to provide clients with love and inspiration when they need it the most.

Rose McGee

Rose McGee is an activist who uses an unlikely tool to advocate for justice – sweet potato pies. Since the untimely death of Michael Brown, Jr. in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014, Rose has been delivering comfort to those impacted by racial trauma with what she calls *‘the sacred dessert of Black culture’*. Since then, she has expanded her concept to [Sweet Potato Comfort Pie®](#), an organization that serves as a catalyst for caring and building community.

With the help of volunteers, Rose has baked and delivered over 4,000 pies across the country in response to racially driven events in Charleston, South Carolina; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Standing Rock and our very own Twin Cities.

Asha Shoffner

Asha Shoffner is her most authentic self when she’s surrounded by nature. She leads [Saint Paul Parks and Recreation](#)’s outdoor and environmental education work. She has initiated and managed groundbreaking programs to create opportunities for Black, Indigenous and People of Color in the Twin Cities to enjoy the outdoors. In the past year, Asha has organized 45 BIPOC-specific events, reaching over 500 people.

She is the founder and creator of [BIPOC Outdoors Twin Cities](#), a safe and welcoming space for BIPOC and queer folk to experience the excitement of fishing (including ice fishing) workshops, cross-country skiing and snowboarding lessons, Indigenous plant medicine hikes, camping/canoeing trips and more.

This year’s Facing Race award recipients will be celebrated during a 30-minute program streamed live at [facingrace.org](#) on October 12. The program will be hosted by Dr. Jolly and Nadege Souvenir, chief operating officer, the Foundation.

Established in 2007, the Foundation’s Facing Race Awards honor Minnesota’s anti-racism activists who work tirelessly to change the narrative on race and create communities where everyone feels safe, valued and respected.

About the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation

The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation believes in the best of Minnesota and the power of its communities. With roots in Saint Paul and partners across the state, it is Minnesota’s largest community foundation and the partner of choice for thousands of donors, nonprofits and community organizations. The Foundation aspires to create an equitable, just and vibrant Minnesota where all communities and people thrive by inspiring generosity, advocating for equity and investing in community-led solutions. Visit: [spmcf.org](#)