NAACP®

Des Moines Branch

49TH ANNUAL

FREEDOM FUND BANQUET

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2026

KEYNOTE

Yasmine Arrington Brooks

Founder and Executive Director
ScholarCHIPS, Inc.

Honoring Our Legacy.
Inspiring Leadership.
Advancing Justice.



Yasmine Arrington Brooks

Yasmine Arrington Brooks was born and raised in Washington, DC. She is the Founder and Executive Director of ScholarCHIPS, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing college scholarships, mentoring, mental health support, technology, and a robust support network for children of incarcerated parents, empowering them to complete their college education.

Growing up with an incarcerated father, Yasmine knew all too well the pain, shame, trauma, and emotional and financial burdens that her family situation created. As a junior in high school, while researching scholarships she could apply for to afford a college education, Yasmine and her grandmother realized that they could not find any niche scholarship-mentorship programs specifically dedicated to this often-forgotten population, so she decided to create one herself.

Since 2012, ScholarCHIPS has awarded over $700,000 in college scholarships to over 140 scholars, now with 56 college graduates. The organization continues to support scholars and alumni to and through college and into their careers.

Yasmine graduated from Elon University in 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts in Strategic Communications and History. She also graduated with her Master of Divinity degree in 2018 from Howard University School of Divinity and is currently a Doctor of Ministry student at Wesley Theological Seminary. Yasmine has been named a 2025 L'Oréal Paris Woman of Worth (WomenofWorth.com) and was previously honored as a 2023 CNN Hero and as a "Drew Gooder" on The Drew Barrymore Show. Yasmine has appeared in numerous magazines such as Essence, Vanity Fair, Vogue, TeenVogue, Black Enterprise and Success Magazine. She also has been featured on numerous television programs and news stations – CNBC, CNN, BET, NBC4, WUSA9, WJLA- ABC7 and Fox5DC. Yasmine is a multifaceted force of nature – helping people turn their pain into purpose as an author, poet, plus-size model, podcast host and producer, motivational speaker, and social justice advocate. To learn more about Yasmine please visit YazzieSpeaks.com.

FREEDOM FUND PROGRAM

Welcome
Victoria Henderson Weber

Invocation
Pastor Moses Ward

Lift Every Voice & Sing
Corinthian Baptist Church Praise Team

Dinner

Individual Awards
Danielle Dunbar

Keynote Introduction

Speaker
Yasmine Arrington Brooks

Organization Awards
Kenyada Coney

Closing Remarks
Victoria Henderson Weber

Benediction
Pastor Jordan Rabon

A LEGACY Worth Marking

Tonight we gather for the 49th Annual Freedom Fund Celebration, a tradition that has carried this branch through generations of change. This year holds special meaning as we celebrate 111 years of service by the Des Moines Branch of the NAACP. For more than a century, our members, partners, and neighbors have refused to look away from injustice. They organized, they strategized, and when necessary, they challenged the status quo to clear a path toward equity and dignity for our community.

Their courage is the reason we stand here today. Their legacy is the reason we continue. On behalf of the Des Moines Branch, thank you for being part of this night. The Freedom Fund fuels our mission and sustains the work that does not pause when the banquet ends. Your support ensures that we can keep advancing racial equity, strengthening civic engagement, and expanding opportunity across the metro. It fortifies our efforts in education innovation, environmental justice, health and well-being, inclusive economies, and race and justice; the pillars that guide everything we do.

If 111 years have taught us anything, it is that progress is neither guaranteed nor self-sustaining. It requires people who are willing to disrupt systems that harm, reimagine systems that fail, and build systems that allow every person to live, work, and thrive here in Des Moines. That is the charge before us. And it is a charge we accept together. Tonight, we honor those who lead with courage, serve with conviction, and embody the spirit of collective impact. We celebrate the changemakers who refuse to accept what is and continue pushing for what should be.

Thank you for standing with us, for believing in this mission, and for helping carry a legacy that is still unfolding. May we continue to shape a future worthy of the generations that will follow us.



Victoria Henderson Weber
President
NAACP
Des Moines Branch
www.naacpdesmoines.org

Photo: S. Joe Brown - NAACP Des Moines First Branch President

NAACP

Des Moines Branch

2025-2026 Officers

Victoria Henderson Weber, President
Arnold A. Woods, Jr. Vice President
Kenyada Coney, 2nd Vice President
Ebonee Woods, 3rd Vice President
Danielle Mitchell, Secretary
Annis Austin-Woods, Treasurer
Marcella Edmonds, Assistant Treasurer

Executive Committee

Betty Andrews
Diogenes Ayala
Patricia Barbee
Sharon Brown
Anesa Buchanan
Linda Carter-Lewis*
Mary Chapman
Jacquie Easley-McGhee
Alex Hanna
Russell Lovell
John Olsen
Cory Royster
Jacqueline Thompson
Ezell Tornes
David Walker
Brad Woods

*Emeritus

Branch Presidents

1915-1917 S. Joe Brown
1918-1920 E. R. Hall
1921-1923 J. B. Morris, Sr.
1924 Dr. J. A. Jefferson
1925 Charles P. Howard
1926-1929 S. Sue Brown
1930 A. A. Alexander
1931 A. P. Trotter
1932-1934 S. M. Riley
1935-1939 Fred O. Morrow, Sr.
1940-1941 Georgine Morris
1942-1943 Ike Smalls
1944 John S. Coleman
1945-1947 A. P. Trotter
1948-1949 Luther T. Glanton
1950-1951 Rev. George A. Singleton
1952-1953 William Bell
1954-1955 Archie Greenlee
1956-1959 Clara Bayles
1960-1961 J. B. Morris, Jr.
1962-1968 Robert A. Wright, Sr
1969-1970 Malcolm Hogan
1971-1972 John M. Estes, Jr.
1973 Bob (Adin) Davis
1974 Charles Crook, Jr.
1975 Rev. Ivan Johnson
1976 Maude E. White
1977-1980 Vincent Chapman
1981-1992 Larry W. Carter
1993-1995 Samuel Woods, Sr.
1996-2001 Rev. Keith A. Ratliff, Sr
2002-2010- Linda M. Carter-Lewis
2011-2018 Arnold A. Woods, Jr
2018-2020 Kameron Middlebrooks
2020-Present Victoria Henderson-Weber

NAACP

Des Moines Branch

Our Founding

Written by S. Joe Brown

Sometime during the Christmas holidays in 1912, Attorney S. Joe Brown met at Topeka, Kansas, Miss Kathryn Johnson, who called his attention to the work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and promised to have some literature sent to him from the National Headquarters.

About two years later, in the fall of 1914, he received a further consignment of literature and a letter from Miss Mary Child's Nearny, then National Secretary, suggesting that he call together a group of members of both races whom he thought might be interested in establishing a branch of the movement in Des Moines. She also informed him that Dr. Joel E. Spingarn, then Chairman of the National Board, would be passing through Des Moines in January 1915, and that, if desired, he might stop off and address the group.

The committee was formed, and plans were completed for the organization of the branch upon the visit of Dr. Spingarn during his transcontinental tour in the effort of the National Association to organize branches in the Midwest. The date of the organization was moved to January 18, 1915, at which time Miss Johnson was present and perfected the organization as Branch #25 with 33 members. The following officers were elected: Attorney S. Joe Brown, President; A.A. Alexander, Vice President; Mrs. Jessye E. McClain, Secretary; Wade H. McCree, Treasurer; and the following additional members of the Executive Committee: Dr. A.J. Booker, E.R. Hall, Jesse A. Graves, Mrs. S. Joe Brown, Mrs. John L. Thompson, Mrs. J.P. Hamilton, Attorney Casper Schenk, Hon. Harvey Ingram, and Rev. E.G. Jackson.

On January 20, 1915, Dr. Spingarn arrived and addressed our first public meeting, which was held at Corinthian Baptist Church. He was introduced by Governor George W. Clark, and as a result of this meeting, our membership soon grew to 225. Hardly had the branch been organized before it was called upon to lead a fight against a "Jim Crow" marriage bill introduced in our state legislature. We won this fight, as we did another one 10 years later, both with the able assistance of Attorney Casper Schenk.

In the spring of 1916, we staged a legal battle against the production in Des Moines of the pernicious movie picture "The Birth of a Nation." After having procured a resolution from the City Council condemning the film and directing the Corporation Counsel to use every effort to prevent it from being shown, we filed information upon which warrants were issued and the operators arrested and prosecuted. The trial lasted for several days, but the court held that the picture did not violate any ordinance of our city, so we were unsuccessful. However, we were highly complimented by the attorneys for the producers, who declared we had given them the hardest fight they had experienced in any city up to that time in which they had been unsuccessfully opposed.

NAACP

Des Moines Branch

History, Cont.

In November 1917, Attorney Brown, after three years' service, retired as president, and Mr. E.R. Hall, who had been continuously on the Executive Committee from the founding of the branch, was elected to succeed him. His election brought to the support of the branch a large group of younger people who organized themselves into a dramatic club. This club attained such notoriety that their portraits were published not only in our local papers but also in The Crisis, thus giving the branch national prominence.

During Mr. Hall's administration, which also continued for three years, the membership grew. Mrs. S. Joe Brown was sent to the first National Anti-Lynching Conference held in New York City in June 1919. Attorney James B. Morris succeeded Mr. Hall and also served for three years. During his administration, the branch successfully prosecuted the residential segregation case brought by Miss Dorothy Quail, secured the passage of a resolution by the City Council against segregation at the bathing beaches, secured an amendment to our state civil rights law, and established its first junior department with Mrs. S. Joe Brown as its head. Her work so attracted the attention of the National Office that she was invited to appear upon the national conference program in Kansas City, MO, and outline a program for junior work.

Attorney Morris was succeeded by Dr. J.A. Jefferson, who served but one year, and who was followed by Attorney Charles P. Howard, who also served but one year. Under Attorney Howard's administration, the branch secured the first conviction under our amended civil rights law and defeated another proposed "Jim Crow" bill in our state legislature.

Attorney Howard was succeeded in 1925 by our first woman president, Mrs. S. Joe Brown, who during her first year placed the branch back on the honor roll at National Headquarters. She secured a second conviction under our civil rights law and represented the branch at the national conference at Chicago, where she presided and introduced Colonel Theodore Roosevelt at one of the largest mass meetings of that session. Mrs. Brown served us for five years and, toward the close of her administration, planned and presided over an NAACP exhibit in the Educational Building at the State Fair. We were awarded second place in the adult education section the first year, and the following year, under the administration of her successor, Mr. A.A. Alexander, she repeated the exhibit and secured first place.

At the expiration of two years' service, Mr. Alexander was succeeded by Mr. A.P. Trotter, and he, after two years, by Rev. Dr. S.M. Riley. Mr. F.O. Morrow then served until November 1939. Mrs. J.B. Morris was elected our second woman president, and she began her work by inviting the representatives of all the branches in the state to join us in celebrating our Silver Anniversary on January 18, 1940, at which time a state conference of branches was launched.

CITY OF DES MOINES
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Attendees of the NAACP Des Moines Freedom Fund Banquet,

On behalf of the City of Des Moines, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to the 49th Annual NAACP Des Moines Freedom Fund Banquet. This banquet serves as a celebration of all the hard work the NAACP Des Moines Branch does to make the metro a place where our entire community thrives.

The work this branch does to protect civil and human rights does not go unnoticed. While this time is used to celebrate past achievements, it is also essential to securing the resources and partnerships needed for continued progress. Thank you to all the local leaders, activists, business owners, youth, and volunteers who have come together for this event – you truly are making a difference!

Sincerely,

Mayor Connie Boesen
City of Des Moines

CONGRATULATIONS

NAACP Des Moines

on the 49th Annual Freedom Fund Banquet

WITH APPRECIATION AND COMMITMENT

Your Polk County Supervisors-Elect



Heather Jones-Brown

DISTRICT 4

Connect with Heather

&



Izaah JB Knox

DISTRICT 5

Connect with Izaah

We look forward to serving you!

2026 Freedom Fund Award Honorees

For having demonstrated exceptional dedication to advancing our Enduring Commitments.



Investing In My Future

Investing In My Future, Inc. was founded in 2010 by Mary Wells and Syeta Glanton after they saw the gap in college enrollment for African Americans in Des Moines. Led by a volunteer board, the nonprofit works with elementary, middle, and high school students and parents, building confidence and concrete skills through workshops, including STEAM, and two college tours each year — an Iowa State Tour in the fall and an HBCU Tour in the spring. It also awards scholarships to graduating seniors at its annual Senior Recognition event. For 16 years, IIMF has helped Des Moines students take their rightful places as leaders.

Pernell Cezar

Pernell Cezar is co-founder and CEO of BLK & Bold Specialty Beverages, the Des Moines coffee and tea company he founded in 2018 with his childhood friend Rod Johnson. BLK & Bold gives 5% of its profits to nonprofits serving youth, and is described as the first Black-owned nationally distributed coffee brand. Cezar, a University of Northern Iowa graduate in finance and marketing, mentors Black entrepreneurs and has kept giving to youth-serving nonprofits at the center of the company's business model. In 2019, BLK & Bold was named the Des Moines NAACP Small Business of the Year.



2026 Freedom Fund Award Honorees

These organizations have demonstrated exceptional dedication to advancing our Enduring Commitments.



Willkie House

Founded in 1917, Willkie House is one of Iowa's oldest African American nonprofit organizations, serving Des Moines children and families for more than a century. Under Executive Director Weslyn Caldwell, its mission is to develop character and esteem in young people through academics, social skill building, health, and recreation. Its afterschool and summer programs serve seven Des Moines Public Schools, with transportation, literacy support, and enrichment for 60 school-year participants and 75 youth each summer. In 2025, about 90 percent of the youth it served were students of color. Willkie House lives its motto: "It takes a village to raise a child.

King of Kings Missionary Baptist Church

King of Kings Missionary Baptist Church, at 619 SE 15th Street in Des Moines, has served the community since 1980. Under Senior Pastor Dr. Jordan Patrick Rabon since 2014, the congregation lives its motto, "Welcome to the kingdom" — discipleship that goes beyond Sunday worship into service. Its blessing box outside the church is stocked all week with food and necessities; members serve meals to people experiencing homelessness, lead monthly worship at a local senior care facility, and partner as a Toys for Tots distributor. The church also provides holiday meal baskets and school supplies. In 2025 it received the Central District Christian Education Award.



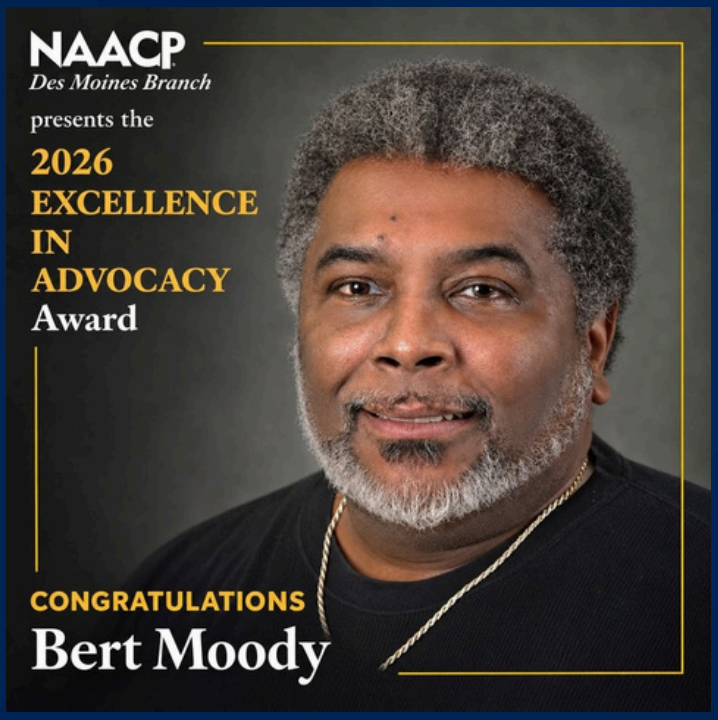
2026 Freedom Fund Award Honorees

These individuals have demonstrated exceptional dedication to advancing our Enduring Commitments.

Kourtney Perry

Kourtney Perry is a Des Moines native, entrepreneur, and servant leader. She is founder and CEO of Privacy, LLC, founded in 2018, which provides business management, event planning, and brand strategy for small businesses and nonprofits, and founder of Ladie Lex Scented Candles, a self-care brand she started in her basement during the pandemic. Perry gives her time and talents to organizations that empower young people, including the Many Shades of Colour Young Women's Conference and Slay the Runway children's fashion show, and serves as a project manager for the Iowa Juneteenth Observance. She leads through joy, creating community wherever she goes.





Bert Moody

Bert Moody is a volunteer photographer who has preserved Des Moines community history behind the camera for four decades. A freelance photographer since 1985, he runs Imagez Design & Photo Studio and serves as photographer, IT consultant, and web designer for Urban Experience Magazine, a role he has held since the magazine began. He is treasurer and a board member of the Des Moines Urban Experience and photographs and designs for the Iowa Juneteenth Observance. Moody also shows up faithfully in his neighborhood association and at city civic roundtables. A quiet leader, he makes sure community joy and community voice are recorded.

2026 Freedom Fund Award Honorees

For having demonstrated exceptional dedication to advancing our Enduring Commitments.



Tiana Mays

At just 14, Tiana Mays is already leading. She took her family's story to Capitol Hill, advocating with March of Dimes for the SHINE for Autumn Act; Congressman Zach Nunn's office later told her that her story made a difference after he cosponsored the bill. She is the inspiration behind the #TwinChronicals children's book series and leads Sensory Story Times across Iowa for children with autism, sensory needs, and other developmental differences. Tiana serves on Student Council and as a Student Ambassador, and advocates for herself as a student with dyslexia, moving from an IEP in fifth grade to college coursework through DMACC.

NAACP Youth Council

For $15, you can sponsor a one-year NAACP youth membership for a young person in our community. Youth members connect with the NAACP Youth movement, find their voice, build leadership skills, and take part in advocacy, civic engagement, and local youth programs.

Sponsors

Justice Partners

DES MOINES UNIVERSITY
MEDICINE & HEALTH SCIENCES

UnityPoint Health

Sponsors

Community Partners

ATHENE

Bankers Trust®

POLK COUNTY
HOUSING
TRUST FUND

Sponsors

Community Partners

The Directors Council

VIOLENCE FREE IOWA | The Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence

DMACC 19 XI 66 Des Moines Area Community College TM

https://www.dmacc.edu/

GRINNELL COLLEGE

https://www.grinnell.edu/

Sponsors

Community Partners

FAITH MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
EST. 2010

KING OF KINGS
Missionary Baptist Church

Community Benefactors

Rob Barron
Mary Chapman
Courtney Clarke
Bridget Cravens-Neely
Langston & Zora Henderson Weber
Russell Lovell
Yvonne & Tony Salem
Michelle Talbott
David Walker
Emily Webb