

## PRESS RELEASE

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### WeGOJA Foundation Wins Trustees' Award for Organizational Excellence from the National Trust for Historic Preservation

**Washington, D.C. – Nov. 4, 2021** – The [WeGOJA Foundation](http://www.wegoja.org) was presented the Trustees' Award for Organizational Excellence from the National Trust for Historic Preservation during an awards ceremony at the annual [PastForward](#) conference. The award recognizes a nonprofit organization that has demonstrated sustained and superlative achievement in historic preservation. Watch the ceremony [here](#) (scroll down to near the bottom.)

The WeGOJA Foundation, formerly the South Carolina African American Heritage Foundation, provides support to further the mission of the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission (SCAAHC) to identify and promote the preservation of African American sites, structures, and culture in South Carolina. In 1993, only 36 African American historic sites in South Carolina had markers or were on the National Register of Historic Places. Today, thanks to the efforts of the SCAAHC supported by WeGOJA, more than 400 sites have been documented, officially recognizing the contributions African Americans made in building South Carolina.

In addition to their advocacy work, the WeGOJA Foundation has supported the SCAAHC as it developed essential publications, resources, and programs, including a teacher's guide for K-12 students, a guide for African American entrepreneurs working to preserve rural heritage and culture, a digital mobile guide to African American historic sites and cultural attractions across South Carolina called "The Green Book of South Carolina," and "Black Carolinians Speak: Portraits of a Pandemic," an innovative oral history initiative capturing the African American experience during the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis.

"The National Preservation Awards are an inspiring showcase of how historic preservation continues to evolve as a powerful force that builds stronger communities throughout our country," said Paul Edmondson, president and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "This year's PastForward theme is *Lead the Change*, and our award recipients truly are doing just that for particular places and for the national preservation movement. It is an honor to present the Trustees' Award for Organizational Excellence to the WeGOJA Foundation for the important work they are doing in South Carolina."

When the WeGOJA Foundation and the SCAAHC were experiencing significant growth, they were led by Jannie Harriot of Hartsville, SC, a businesswoman, retired school teacher, and activist who began her advocacy by helping to save Butler High School from being torn down to make way for a Walmart.

“I am delighted and overwhelmed that the National Trust has selected the WeGOJA Foundation for this prestigious award,” Harriot said. “The advocacy happening throughout this country is significant, and South Carolina is proud to be a part of it.

“Our work is a labor of love,” Harriot continued. “We owe it to the people who came before us to identify, preserve, and protect their legacies, so that the true story of our past is well documented, studied, understood, and carried into the future.”

Under her plan for sustainability, one of Harriot’s priorities was to find a successor executive director for the foundation to lead further growth. In January 2021, she tapped Dawn Dawson-House, former director of Corporate Communications for the SC Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism, to lead the foundation.

“I am standing on amazing shoulders,” Dawson-House said. “Our goal is to continue growing WeGOJA to support the SCAAHC and broaden our advocacy and service to all corners of the state.”

The National Preservation Awards are bestowed on those whose skills and determination have made a positive impact in their communities through preservation of our architectural and cultural heritage. This year’s recipients demonstrate the power of new community-centered activations of important landmarks; the deep significance of cultural landscapes and their ongoing stewardship; the perseverance of individuals and organizations using historic places to tell the full, true history of our country; the importance of companies and crafts people whose work restores the richness of the past; and the visionary leadership of public officials who support preservation projects and legislation from the local to the federal level.

The awards ceremony was hosted by television host and preservationist Bob Vila, who serves as a trustee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This year’s awards ceremony also included a special tribute to the late Richard H. Driehaus and his legacy of national and international preservation philanthropy. The event is part of PastForward Online 2021. The program can be viewed at [SavingPlaces.org/Conference](https://SavingPlaces.org/Conference).

#### **The 2021 National Preservation Award Winners:**

- **Louise du Pont Crowninshield Award for Lifetime Achievement:** Patricia M. O’Donnell, FASLA, ACIP, F. ICOMOS, *Charlotte, Vermont*
- **American Express Aspire Award:** Jordan Ryan, *Indianapolis, Indiana*
- **Trustees’ Award for Organizational Excellence:** WeGOJA Foundation, *Statewide, South Carolina*
- **The National Trust/Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Award for Federal Partnerships in Historic Preservation:** Black Officers Club, *Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri*
- **The John H. Chafee Trustees Award for Outstanding Achievement in Public Policy:** U.S. House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn (SC-06), *South Carolina*

- **The Trustees Emeritus Award for Historic Site Stewardship:** China Alley Preservation Society, Hanford, California

#### **THE 2021 RICHARD H. DRIEHAUS FOUNDATION NATIONAL PRESERVATION AWARD WINNERS:**

- Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, *Washington, DC*
- Moynihan Train Hall, *New York, New York*
- Milwaukee Soldiers Home, *Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

#### **About the National Trust**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately funded nonprofit organization, works to save America's historic places to enrich our future. [SavingPlaces.org](https://SavingPlaces.org)

#### **About PastForward**

PastForward is the annual conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, November 2-5, attracting thousands of people passionate about saving places. Attendees include preservationists, advocates and architects, city planners and historic site directors, students and elected officials, commissioners, and main street directors. This year's theme is **Lead the Change**, focusing on the topics of promoting equity and justice through historic preservation, adapting to a changing climate, and sharpening essential practices of preservation. [SavingPlaces.org/Conference](https://SavingPlaces.org/Conference)

#### **About the WeGOJA Foundation**

The WeGOJA Foundation furthers the mission of the SC African American Heritage Commission to identify, document and promote African American history and culture in the state. Learn more at [WeGOJA.org](https://WeGOJA.org). **#KeepCultureCool #DonateToday**

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