

Community Organizer Robert Dawkins, Affordable Housing Advocate Charis Blackmon Awarded Nish Jamgotch Jr. Humanitarian Awards

CHARLOTTE, NC – Named after a tireless advocate for the humanitarian spirit, the [Nish Jamgotch Jr. Humanitarian Award](#) announced its two most recent honorees: [Robert Dawkins](#), community organizer and political director of Action NC; and [Charis Blackmon](#), West Side Community Land Trust executive director and affordable housing advocate.

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Foundation For The Carolina facilitates the award, presented to an individual or group whose creative achievements elevate quality of life and show solid promise of enhancing the survival, dignity and well-being of humankind in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community. The award was established by the Nish Jamgotch, a UNC-Charlotte professor and humanitarian who passed away in 2021.

“There is no fluff to Robert Dawkins,” said Federico Rios, the Foundation’s senior vice president, Robinson Center for Civic Leadership, about the 2024 winner of the award. “He is polished, but he is real. He’s tactful and smart. He’s a hardworking person who wants the best for the community. He’s the best of Charlotte.”

As the political director of Action NC, Dawkins led the effort to create a coalition of 16 nonprofits and community organizations that asked Charlotte City Council to increase funding in key areas. The People’s Budget Coalition successfully lobbied the city to double the Housing Trust Fund from \$50 million to \$100 million.

Charis Blackmon is making an impact in West Charlotte. Under her leadership, West Side Community Land Trust has produced 161 permanently affordable, high-quality housing units. Among them: The Trust purchased land upon which was built The Legacy at Carr Heights on West Boulevard, apartment homes for seniors ages 55 and over.

“Charis is doing fantastic work to address gap needs in terms of housing in Charlotte,” said Rios. “She combines expertise with a humility that allows her to connect with developers, homeowners, political and business leaders – all crucial to expanding affordable housing.”

Named for the retired UNC Charlotte professor who established the program, the Nish Jamgotch Jr. Humanitarian Award is facilitated by FFTC, which also holds the fund that supports the award. In the words of Dr. Jamgotch, “to be creative means to uncover something new; or to synthesize seemingly unrelated experiences in a fresh and inspiring way; or to provide a foundation for future intellectual and scientific breakthrough that can truly make a difference,” and it is in this spirit that awards should be made.

Previous award winners include:

- Thereasa Elder, a public health pioneer who was among the first to integrate health care in the Charlotte region.
- Ric Elias, CEO of Red Ventures and founder of Golden Door Scholars, a nonprofit that creates educational and career opportunities for high-performing undocumented students.

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- Jeffrey Balek, a blind man using specially made braille books to volunteer at Y Readers, the YMCA of Greater Charlotte's literacy program for students in grades K-3 who are reading below grade level.
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department Major Mike Campagna and Mecklenburg County public defender Toussaint Romain, for their work during the 2016 Keith Lamont Scott protests.
- Riley Howell and Reed Parlier, two promising UNC Charlotte students who died when a gunman opened fire in a classroom on April 30, 2019.
- Sil Ganzó, founder and executive director of ourBRIDGE for KIDS, who transitioned her organization when the pandemic hit from its after-school mission to helping distribute thousands of meals per week to the community.
- Adrienne Threatt, Hope Vibes Co-Founder and executive director, for her work aiding the community of people without homes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

About Foundation For The Carolinas

Founded in 1958, Foundation For The Carolinas is a nonprofit community foundation that serves a 13-county region across the Carolinas. FFTC helps people, nonprofits and companies amplify the impact of their charitable endeavors through service to fundholders and community convening to address critical issues. Our mission is to inspire philanthropy and empower individuals to create a better community. Visit fftc.org or philanthropyFOCUS.org.

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