

Isaiah Thomas

ISAIAH THOMAS AWARD
FOR DISTINGUISHED COMMUNITY SERVICE

HONORING 2024 RECIPIENT

J. CHRISTOPHER COLLINS

FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2024
MECHANICS HALL



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OF WHAT YOU HAVE.
”

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2024 ISAIAH THOMAS AWARD DINNER
THE EVENING'S PROGRAM

RECEPTION

NATIONAL ANTHEM Mary MacKenzie

INVOCATION Father Thomas McMurray

DINNER

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE The Delilahs

WELCOME Patty Eppinger

ISAIAH THOMAS AWARD VIDEO

**INTRODUCTION
OF KEYNOTE SPEAKER** Patty Eppinger

KEYNOTE REMARKS Dr. Helen Boucher

**ISAIAH THOMAS AWARD
PRESENTATION** George W. Tetler, III

*2024 Isaiah Thomas Citizen of the Year
J. Christopher Collins, Esq.*

CLOSING Patty Eppinger



2024 ISAIAH THOMAS AWARD COMMITTEES

ISAIAH THOMAS AWARD SELECTION COMMITTEE

Warner Fletcher

2017 Isaiah Thomas Award Recipient

Patricia Eppinger

2016 Isaiah Thomas Award Co-Recipient

Michael D. Sleeper

2015 Isaiah Thomas Award Recipient

Mark W. Fuller

2014 Isaiah Thomas Award Recipient

Abraham W. Haddad

2013 Isaiah Thomas Award Recipient

ISAIAH THOMAS AWARD PLANNING COMMITTEE

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Risk Strategies Company & The George F. and Sybil H. Fuller Foundation

George W. Tetler

Bowditch & Dewey

Katie Crockett

Patty Eppinger

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J. CHRISTOPHER COLLINS
2024 ISAIAH THOMAS AWARD HONOREE



J. Christopher Collins grew up in Walpole, MA. He was among the youngest of a large extended family of Irish and Italian descent. His parents both graduated from Norwood High School in 1935. Chris's mother was valedictorian of her class. She won 5 gold subject medals and the coveted Lane Medal which is still awarded today to the top academic student at Norwood High School. Despite his mother's accomplished academic career, she did not have the opportunity to attend college while his father attended Holy Cross. His parents taught Chris the value and importance of education, a lesson that would inspire much of his future community service.

Worcester was always part of the Collins family stories because not only his father, but his father's two older brother attended Holy Cross. Worcester was a seemingly far away city on a hill – the home of Holy Cross. One of his first memories of Worcester is a particular Holy Cross football game where the weather was particularly "Worcestering" and his dad, who never wore a hat, reluctantly pulled up the hood of his nylon jacket to block out the sleet and the rain and the wind.

Somehow, despite that anecdote of the tough Worcester weather, Chris followed his brother Michael to Holy Cross where he learned first hand the value of a Jesuit, liberal arts education. Chris feels passionately for this type of high-quality education of the whole person, intellectually, socially, and spiritually; combining personal development with a dedication to serve others and a deep understanding of the human condition. Values he developed at Holy Cross and has carried with him throughout his career.

Chris credits much of his commitment to service to his family, his hometown of Walpole, his education at Holy Cross and his formative experiences at The Paul Revere Life Insurance Company which instilled in him a deep sense of community. Paul Revere exhibited its role in Worcester as a faithful and careful neighbor and expected its employees to take an active role in the community. He started his career there January 16, 1984.





Paul Revere was acquired by Provident Companies and then merged with Unum. With each transition, Chris grew professionally until becoming General Counsel for Unum's US Operations and then ultimately serving as Of Counsel at Mirick O'Connell in the Life, Health, Disability, and ERISA Litigation Group.

Throughout his 40-year career in Worcester, Chris has embodied the ideals of the Isaiah Thomas Award through his commitment to "distinguished community service." He has served on numerous non-profit boards, with thousands feeling the impacts of his time, his talent, and his treasure.

Chris led efforts to give the Paul Revere silver collection to the Worcester Art Museum, preserving the history of these pieces and moving them from a private company to a public venue to be enjoyed by all.

At a time when many companies were leaving the downtown, Chris understood the role of a vibrant and thriving downtown. Working with the City of Worcester, under Chris' leadership, Unum became the anchor tenant at CitySquare, ensuring that hundreds of employees would remain in downtown Worcester for

years to come and helped to leverage additional tenants in the new construction replacing the Galleria.

He served for many years as a board member with The Bridge of Central Massachusetts. The Bridge later merged with Alternatives Unlimited affiliation to form Open Sky Community Services. After years of service to the agency, including leading The Bridge's capital campaign in 2003, enabling the renovation of a factory building on Mann Street to become the new headquarters for The Bridge and home to its G. Stanley Hall School. In honor of his long-time service, The Bridge named its main administrative building the J. Christopher Collins Building, now home to OpenSky Community Services.

He led the first ever capital campaign for ArtsWorcester, Framing the Future, which raised \$1.25 million for the organization ensuring their relocation to the downtown in the Printers Building along Portland Street, a much more accessible and visible location for their artists and visitors and building out its technical capacity for contemporary art practices.

J. CHRISTOPHER COLLINS
2024 ISAIAH THOMAS AWARD HONOREE

Chris is presently a member of the Council of the American Antiquarian Society which was founded by Isaiah Thomas himself. He is also a Trustee at the College of the Holy Cross.

While many of these accomplishments are outstanding, Chris is most proud of his work with the Nativity School of Worcester, ensuring young men from across the city and from all backgrounds receive a first-class Jesuit inspired educational experience tuition-free. Chris served on the Board from 2011 to 2020, serving as Board Chair for 7 years. He is now leading Access & Impact: The Campaign for Nativity School of Worcester. After 20 years of success, the Nativity School Campaign Committee, helmed by Co-Chair Chris Collins, is raising \$20 million to open the Julie Power Girls Division, to ensure young women in Worcester receive the same opportunity to thrive and develop into future well rounded leaders.

Chris and his wife Catherine live in Sterling Massachusetts. They are the proud parents of two children, Sarah and Daniel Collins. Both children are married. Sarah to Tony Perry and Daniel to Carolyn Henderson. Both couples live in Los Angeles.

Today, we acknowledge and show appreciation for Chris' extraordinary commitment to Worcester and to its people. He has shown that personal success must be joined to the well-being of the community. We can, and should, all learn lessons from Chris' perseverance, sacrifices, and devotion to others. While Isaiah Thomas is marked as Worcester's "first great citizen," Chris Collins has established himself as 2024's Isaiah Thomas Award Citizen of the Year for his profound impacts on Worcester over the past 40 years.







ISAIAH THOMAS: 1749-1831

The press that Isaiah Thomas (1749-1831) learned to use as a child while apprenticed to Boston printer Zachariah Fowle was constructed in 1747 in London, England. When Thomas eventually took over Fowle's printing business, he also became the owner of this press.

On this press Thomas printed his newspaper, *The Massachusetts Spy*, which roused Americans throughout the Colonies to rebel against British authority and inspired them to seek independence. His printing shop was labeled a "seditious foundry" and he was frequently in trouble with the Royal government of Massachusetts.

Fearing this press would be impounded, Thomas's friends, including John Hancock (1737-1793), Joseph Warren (1741-1775), and local Worcester patriot and blacksmith Timothy Bigelow (1739-1790), urged him to remove it from Boston for safe keeping inland.

On the evening of April 16, 1775, Thomas packed up this press and, in his own words, "stole it out of Boston." He rowed it across the Charles River, put it on a cart, and sent it to Worcester where it was soon after reassembled in the basement of Timothy Bigelow's house.

Thomas printed the May 3, 1775 issue of *The Massachusetts Spy* where on page three he printed his eyewitness account of the Battles of Lexington and Concord. On a copy of that issue, Thomas himself wrote, "This is the first thing ever printed in Worcester."

THE AWARD

Since the inception of the Isaiah Thomas Award in 1950, honorees have received an iconic replica of his printing press, to exemplify Isaiah Thomas' spirit of commitment and community service.

Image & History of the Award Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society

PAST RECIPIENTS

ISAIAH THOMAS AWARD RECIPIENTS

1950	George F. Booth	1987	John D. Hunt
1951	Mrs. J. Herbert Johnson	1989	Anne M. & Paul S. Morgan
1952	Harry G. Stoddard	1991	Mark R. Ungerer
1953	Philip M. Morgan	1993	Lois B. Green
1954	George N. Jeppson	1995	Fairman C. Cowan
1955	Everett F. Merrill	1997	William P. Densmore
1956	George F. Fuller	1999	Rev. Richard L. & Shirley A. Wright
1957	Cardinal John F. Wright	2000	Rev. Paul D. Kennedy D.D.
1958	F. Harold Daniels	2001	Russell E. Fuller
1959	Raymond P. Harold	2002	Henry B. Dewey
1960	Richard C. Potter	2003	Francis R. Carroll
1961	Milton P. Higgins	2004	Edwin B. Coghlin Jr.
1962	Richard J. Rutherford	2005	Michael P. Angelini
1963	Edwin B. Coghlin	2006	Charles F. Monahan Jr.
1965	H. Ladd Plumley	2007	Sumner B. Tilton Jr.
1967	Howard B. Jefferson	2008	James W. Coghlin Sr.
1969	Cosmo E. Mingolla	2009	John & Kay Bassett
1971	Robert S. & Helen A. Bowditch	2010	Marcy C. DeFeudis
1973	Edward C. Maher	2012	Martha & Arthur Pappas
1975	Anthony A. Borgatti Jr.	2013	Abraham Haddad
1977	John Jeppson II	2014	Mark W. Fuller
1979	Joseph T. Benedict	2015	Michael D. Sleeper
1982	Richard C. Steele	2016	Patricia & Frederick Eppinger
1983	Anthony J. Stevens Jr.	2017	Warner S. Fletcher
1985	Jacob Hiatt		

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

THANK YOU TO THE ORGANIZATIONS THAT CONTRIBUTED THEIR TIME AND RESOURCES TO THE PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION OF THE 2024 ISAIAH THOMAS AWARDS:

American Antiquarian Society
PENTA Communications, Inc.

Telegram & Gazette
Worcester Business Journal

Worcester Regional Research
Bureau

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE PREVIOUS ISAIAH THOMAS AWARD RECIPIENTS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO HELP ENSURE THE AWARDS REMAIN IN PERPETUITY.

Mike Angelini
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Michael Sleeper
Peter & Craig Stevens
on behalf of Anthony Stevens
Tony Tilton
Pastor Richard & Shirley Wright

THE NOTRE DAME ACADEMY COMMUNITY EXTENDS
OUR HEARTFELT CONGRATULATIONS TO
J. CHRISTOPHER COLLINS



*Chris' commitment to the community sets a standard that others aspire to reach.
This award and recognition is truly well-deserved.*



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THE 2024 ISIAH THOMAS COMMITTEE
EXTENDS ITS DEEPEST GRATITUDE
TO THE ORGANIZATIONS LISTED BELOW

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CREATIVE SERVICES / GRAPHIC DESIGN	PENTA Communications, Inc.
ISAIAH THOMAS VIDEO	American Antiquarian Society
ADVERTISEMENT SPACE	Worcester Business Journal
ADVERTISEMENT SPACE & PHOTOS FOR CHRIS COLLINS VIDEO	Telegram & Gazette
CHRIS COLLINS VIDEO	Pagano Media
PHOTOS FOR CHRIS COLLINS VIDEO	ArtsWorcester College of the Holy Cross Steve Joseph Mercantile Center Nativity School of Worcester OpenSky Walpole Historical Society Worcester Art Museum
VOICE TALENT FOR ISAIAH THOMAS & CHRIS COLLINS VIDEOS	Hank Stolz
EVENT MANAGEMENT	Worcester Regional Research Bureau

Congratulations, Chris!



Fletcher Tilton would like to congratulate
the recipient of the 2024 Isaiah Thomas Award,

 **J. Christopher Collins** 

Chris exemplifies the spirit of selflessness and dedication.
His commitment to serving others sets an inspiring example for us all.
Thank you for your outstanding contributions to our community!

Fletcher Tilton_{PC}
Attorneys at law

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Maryellen and Michael F. Collins
and their family
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and celebrate

J. Christopher Collins

on his most worthy selection
as the recipient of the
2024 Isaiah Thomas Award.

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CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU TO CHRIS COLLINS!



The Nativity School of Worcester community is grateful for the many years of impact Chris has had on its students and for his contributions to the establishment of the school's Julie Power Girls Division set to open this summer.



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Congratulations

2024 Isaiah Thomas Award Honoree

J. CHRISTOPHER COLLINS



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Like the Isaiah Thomas Awards, we recognize that giving back is important in helping a community thrive.

Congratulations to this year's recipient, Chris Collins, and we thank him for all he has given to Worcester.

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CONGRATULATIONS CHRIS COLLINS

The Coghlin Family congratulates you on winning the prestigious Isaiah Thomas Award! Your dedication, hard work, and contributions have truly made a profound impact on our community.



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J. Christopher Collins '80**

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Congratulations to all prior year winners and to this year's recipient, J. Christopher Collins.

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Congratulations, Chris!

Mirick O'Connell congratulates our colleague **J. Christopher Collins** for this well-deserved recognition.

Chris is known for his numerous contributions and many years of service to the community.

The **Isaiah Thomas Award** is a special addition to his long list of accolades.



*Chris -
Thank you for sharing in our
Firm's commitment to
bettering the lives of those
who live and work in our
community!*

MIRICK O'CONNELL

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**CHRIS COLLINS,
CONGRATULATIONS
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Chris Collins!**

**Thank you for making our city
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Congratulate

J. CHRISTOPHER COLLINS

The 2024 Isaiah Thomas Award Honoree

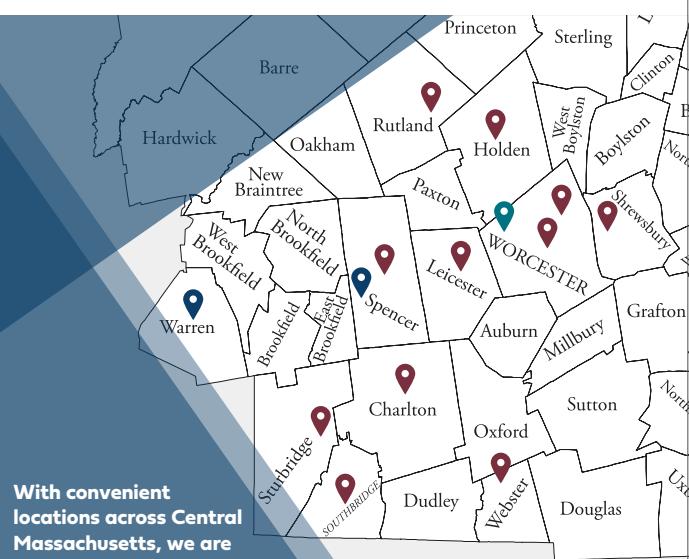


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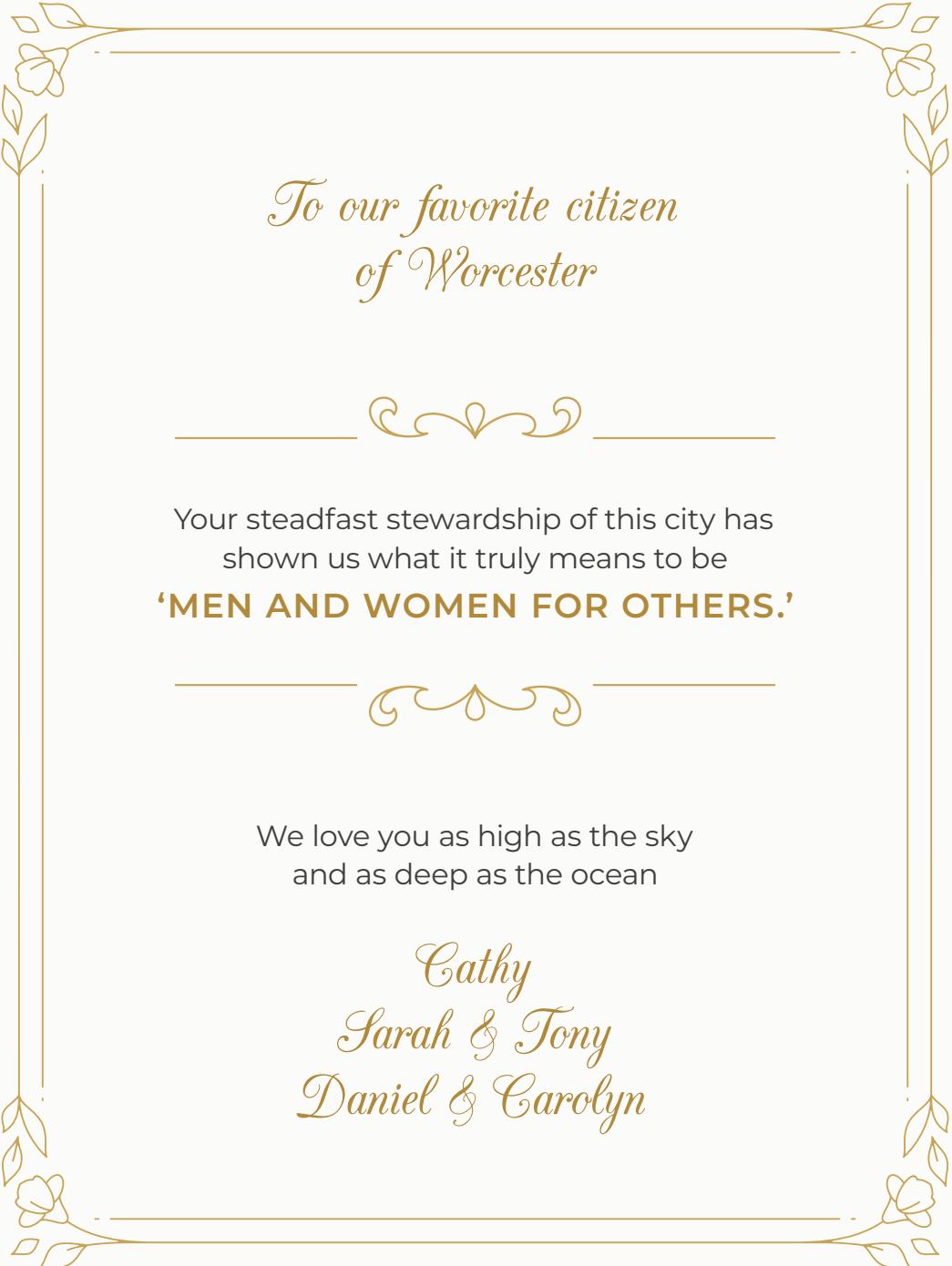


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and as deep as the ocean

*Cathy
Sarah & Tony
Daniel & Carolyn*