

# Martin Luther King, Jr. Pathfinder Awards



## Awarding Organization:

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Board, Mankato, MN

## Award Information:

**The Pathfinder Award** recognizes adults or organizations that, in the spirit of Dr. King, are initiators or action takers in the struggle for equal treatment and human rights. The award represents the ideal that all people should be treated fairly and equally without the fear of discrimination on any basis.

**Wilbur Neuschwander-Frink is the Pathfinder Award recipient.** Wilbur is a community builder who works tirelessly to build a coalition of individuals from all parts of the community in order to change society's attitudes about people with disabilities. Wilbur is an ally of people with disabilities, supporting organizations such as Self Advocates Minnesota, a statewide community of people with intellectual disabilities. She makes sure that self advocates have opportunities to build skills for deciding what they want and for speaking up for themselves.

Wilbur has helped coordinate events such as The Celebrations of the State Apology from the Minnesota Legislature, the Human Rights Art Show, and theater groups for self advocates, seniors, and elementary school classrooms. Wilbur's message is that through theater, community members can think about issues of social justice and present ideas for resolving conflicts that concern us. Recent plays by Aktion Theatre, a theater group for self advocates, include "Soph and the Nana" and "Words." "Soph and the Nana" was written, produced, and performed by individuals with disabilities and the allies who support them onstage. It is a story of a young girl escaping institutional life for a life of self-determination. "Words" includes the words that people with intellectual disabilities consider hurtful or demeaning; words whose power is diminished by identifying the attitudes and emotions associated with them and then shredding the printed word onstage. It's an experience not forgotten easily as the sound of a shredder is mixed with the snuffled sounds of tears as audience members recognize how words have institutionalized racism against people with disabilities.

Wilbur's work has provided opportunities for self advocates to build skills, present ideas, and raise disability awareness. She has helped them be at the forefront of the fight for equal rights, equal access, and equal opportunities.

**The Young Pathfinder Award** was created in 2002 to recognize the hard work, commitment and courage displayed by area young people and organizations of young people as they strive, in the spirit of Dr. King, to achieve fair and equal treatment for all, healthy communities and peaceful resolution to conflicts.

**The Young Pathfinder Award recipient is Zeynab Omar**, a senior at Mankato East Senior High School. An instructor at East High School nominated Zeynab because she believed that Zeynab's character should be recognized and celebrated. The instructor described Zeynab as "a strong and positive woman with a heart of gold." An example of Zeynab's caring nature is her current job. Zeynab is a nursing assistant at a local assisted living center where she cares for elderly individuals and individuals with memory loss. Not many high school students feel comfortable with individuals who are elderly or have a disability, but Zeynab has the ability to see the person despite the age difference, cultural difference, or even socioeconomic difference.

On a regular, basis Zeynab will approach students of various grades, activities, ethnicity and social groups to get them involved with East's Health Occupations Students of America group. She does not pressure them, but is inviting and encouraging. People can "be themselves" around her. When talking with her, you get the sense that she will not judge you if you do not agree with her opinion. Zeynab allows them to speak their mind, listens to what they have to say and communicates with them without causing arguments, disagreements or misunderstanding, a quality that is unique to high school students.

**The Business Pathfinder Award** was established in 2003 and is presented by Greater Mankato Growth, Inc. to recognize businesses that strive for equal treatment, human rights and non-violence in the workplace.

**Lloyd Management Inc. is the recipient of year's Business Pathfinder Award.** Lloyd Management and their staff are dedicated to providing equal housing opportunities to refugee residents. Within its many properties, Lloyd Management incorporates a philosophy of respect for diversity and different cultures, which has ensured equal opportunity and equal access to housing for many refugee families for the past decade.

In addition to providing a welcoming home for refugees, Lloyd Management has demonstrated its philanthropic commitment by sponsoring a refugee family in hardship, through their "Make Yourself at Home" program. Most recently, Lloyd Management partnered with MRCI Refugee Services, where they helped create program curriculum, printed program materials and donated staff time to co-facilitate housing training to refugees over a nine week period. The residents learned basic skills like being a good neighbor, cleaning their apartments and proper use of a washer and dryer. The Lloyd Management team believes learning these skills is like riding a bike, and once learned, they are never forgotten and give the ability to teach others the same skills. There are already 20 residents that are leaders ready to help the next group of refugees moving to the area. A video about the program can be seen at: <http://vimeo.com/33883220>.

Lloyd Management's commitment to welcoming new Americans who call Mankato home promotes equal treatment, inspires hope and contributes toward a more peaceful and healthy community.

## The Event:

Pathfinder Award recipients will be honored at the 28th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration, which will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, January 16 at Halling Recital Hall, Performing Arts Center, Minnesota State University, Mankato.

### Schedule

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| 5:30 p.m. | Social with hors d'oeuvres and music by "String Theory"  |
| 6:15 p.m. | Presentation of awards and scholarships  |
| 6:30 p.m. | Presentation on the "Legacy of the 150th Anniversary of the Dakota Conflict" by Native American storyteller and motivational speaker Colin Weeshaw |

Tickets are \$10 and may be purchased in advance at the following locations

Minnesota State University, Mankato, Institutional Diversity Office, Wigley Administration Center, Room 228  
Greater Mankato Growth, Inc., 1961 Premier Drive, Suite 100, Mankato  
South Central College Bookstore, 1920 Lee Boulevard, North Mankato  
Coffee Hag, 329 N. Riverfront Dr., Mankato  
Cub Foods, East, 1800 Madison Avenue, Mankato and West, 1200 South Riverfront Drive Mankato  
Hy-Vee, Downtown, 410 Riverfront Drive, Mankato and Hilltop, 2010 Adams Street, Mankato  
Greater Mankato Diversity Council, 10 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato

Only a limited number of tickets will be available at the door.