

STOCKTON UNIVERSITY
HUGHES CENTER
HONORS

Thursday, November 13, 2025

6– 8 p.m. | Stockton University Campus Center

Recognizing
Dr. Edward H. Salmon
and Christina M. Renna, Cassie Iacovelli,
Jessica Ramirez, Vlad Vasylyk



PROGRAM

Call to Order

Dr. Tina Zappile

Director, William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy

Welcome

Dr. Joe Bertolino

President, Stockton University

Master of Ceremonies

Rich Tolson

Chair, Hughes Center Advisory Board

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

Distinctive Student Leadership Award

Vlad Vasylyk '27

Presented by **Dr. Lauren Balasco**, *Chair and Associate Professor of Political Science and member of the Hughes Center Advisory Board, Stockton University*

Distinctive Alumni Leadership Award

The Honorable Jessica Ramirez '98

Presented by **Sara Faurot**, *Director of Alumni Relations, Stockton University*

Excellence in Community Leadership Award

Cassie Iacovelli

Presented by **Christina Birchler**, *Director of Stockton University at Hammonton*

Excellence in Civic Engagement Award

Christina Renna

Presented by **Amy Swan**, *Director of Government Relations, Stockton University*

Civility in Politics and Government Award

Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr. Edward Salmon

Presented by **Kim Schalek Downes**, *Vice President, Business Development, Government and External Affairs at New Jersey American Water and Vice Chair of the Hughes Center Advisory Board*

Conclusion

HUGHES CENTER ADVISORY BOARD



Joe Bertolino, Ed.D
President of Stockton University



Steve Batzer
Consultant



Dr. Marissa P. Levy
Dean of School of Social & Behavioral Sciences



Thomas A. Cirignano
President, Cirignano Contracting, Inc.



Amy Swan
Director of Government Relations, Stockton University



Vincent D'Alessandro
President, Southern Region, Ocean First Bank



Dr. Lauren Balasco
Chair and Associate Professor of Political Science



Richard W. Deane
Vice President, Jersey Professional Management



Dr. Mukesh Roy, MBBS, MPH&TM, DTMH
Stockton Trustee and Director, Emergency Preparedness and Planning for Ocean County Health Department



Mark Giannantonio '87
President & CEO, Resorts Casino Hotel



Dr. Edward H. Salmon, Emeritus Founding Chair
Former Chairman, Salmon Ventures Ltd.; Former President, New Jersey Board of Public Utilities; Former Member, New Jersey General Assembly



Patrick M. Gill
CEO, eCommerce Outdoors; CEO, TackleDirect



Richard Tolson, Chair
Labor Consultant, Tolson Consulting



Jim Gilroy
State Government Affairs, PSEG



Kim Schalek Downes, Vice-Chair
Vice President of Business Development, Government Affairs and External Affairs, New Jersey American Water



Arlene Halpern
Community Activist

HUGHES CENTER ADVISORY BOARD



Dr. Anne Harlan
Director, William J. Hughes FAA Technical Center (ret.)



Michael J. Renna
President & Chief Executive Officer of South Jersey Industries



Lori Herndon '92
Founder, Founder of Herndon Bayside Health, LLC; President & CEO, AtlantiCare Health System (ret.)



Eric Scheffler
Executive Director, Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA)



William J. Hughes, Jr.
Principal, Porzio, Bromberg & Newman, P.C.



Kevin M. Sweeney
Rear Admiral USN (ret.)



David R. Mayer
Director of Governmental Affairs, New Jersey American Water



Michael Tuosto
General Manager, Public Affairs, PSEG



Hon. Frank Minor
Mayor, Logan Township

OUR HUGHES CENTER NAMESAKE



"During the some 50 years of my career in public service, I have seen what can be accomplished by true bipartisanship and civility in our public discourse. Restoring those essential values to our political system is extremely important, and I am very proud of the work being performed at the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy as it attempts to address these issues. The programs structured to put civility back into public life, promote civic engagement and expose southern New Jersey to the views of our local, state and national leaders has made a difference in the lives of our citizens, particularly our future leaders – the students."

U.S. Ambassador William J. Hughes
1932-2019

HUGHES CENTER BOARD CO-CHAIRS WELCOME



We, the co-chairs of the 2025 Hughes Public Policy Center Honors Host Committee, and leaders of the Hughes Center Advisory Board, are pleased to welcome you as we recognize five outstanding New Jersey leaders for excellence in their fields and a commitment to public service, civic involvement, and community engagement.

We have many individuals to thank for their dedicated work to make our event on November 13, 2025 at Stockton University's Galloway campus such a success. We thank Stockton University President Dr. Joe Bertolino, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Michael A. Palladino, and School of Behavioral and Social Sciences Dean Dr. Marissa Levy, and Director of Government Relations Amy Swan for their support and investment in the Center. We express our gratitude to Dr. Edward Salmon, chair emeritus of the Hughes Center Advisory Board, and all of the board members for their years of supporting and promoting the Hughes Public Policy Center and its Honors event.

Our Advisory Board provided the outreach and dedication to enlist the support of numerous New Jersey leaders in industry, business, government, and education. Their efforts ensure that the Hughes Center will have the resources to carry on the civic engagement work of Ambassador William J. Hughes. Thank you to all who are supporting this important effort.

Just as important, our energetic and motivated Hughes Center staff – Faculty Director Dr. Tina Zappile, Assistant Director and Head of Research & Polling Alyssa Maurice, Assistant Faculty Director Dr. Claire Abernathy, and Darya Hrybava – worked tirelessly to make tonight a success.

And we thank Stockton University's Event Services, Catering, Facilities & Operations, Development & Alumni Relations, University Relations & Marketing, Graphics, Print Shop, Mail Services, and other staff for their contributions.

We thank each of you for your support and attendance to make the 2025 Honors a memorable event worthy of the career of Ambassador Hughes.

Kind Regards,


Richard Tolson
Co-Chair


Kim Schalek Downes
Co-Chair

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University promotes civic life through engagement, education, and research. It is through these efforts that the Hughes Center provides a much-needed voice for South Jersey and serves as a resource for the faculty, staff and students.

The Hughes Center has sponsored important public forums since its inception 17 years ago, bringing together policy and political experts to share their knowledge with students, faculty, staff and the surrounding community.

Candidate debates, lectures, and the like all play an important role in educating voters, and support Stockton's mission of developing engaged and effective citizens and our priority to cultivate a community of care.

Our students benefit from the efforts of the Hughes Center in many ways. The Washington D.C. Internship Program, facilitated by the center, is a flagship program for Stockton, where students live and work in D.C. while earning academic credit towards their degree program. The center collaborates with our Office of Government Relations on a "Lunch with Legislators" series, where they get to connect with our elected leaders on campus. The center also facilitates civic engagement and get-out-the-vote efforts on campus with programming for students, run by students.

The Stockton Polling Institute, operated by the center, provides experience to students, giving them an inside view of the political polling process, while the polls give voice to the opinions of New Jersey residents.

Our experienced faculty, in tandem with Hughes Center researchers, have produced several research projects for the public, policy makers, and private clients. These data add to the resources available to the public and to the policy makers shaping our society. This research also provides experiential learning opportunities for our students.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our inspiration remains the late Ambassador William Hughes, who was passionate about encouraging students to become civically engaged at college and in their communities. Your support of the center is a tribute to the legacy of Ambassador Hughes and ensures that the work he did, and even more importantly, the model of civic engagement he represented, continues to set an example for Stockton University students and New Jersey. Stockton is proud to be the home of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy and appreciates your support of their important work.

Congratulations to 2025's honorees. We thank you for your dedication to public service, your willingness to work with others and your commitment to community leadership, all of which serve as shining examples for Stockton's faculty, staff and students.

- Dr. Joe Bertolino, President



ABOUT STOCKTON



Founded in 1969, Stockton University has grown nearly tenfold since opening its doors in the fall of 1971 with a class of 1,000 students at the old Mayflower Hotel in Atlantic City. Today, nearly 9,000 students attend classes on the 1,600-acre Galloway campus in the Pinelands National Reserve and at Stockton University Atlantic City, just steps from the beach and Boardwalk.

Under newly appointed President Joe Bertolino, Stockton enters an era that retains its commitment to student-focused interdisciplinary undergraduate liberal arts education while expanding programs to meet the demands of the 21st century workforce. Undergraduates can choose from more than 160 areas of study, including Africana Studies, Cannabis Studies, Criminal Justice, Education, Environmental Science, Hospitality, Tourism and Event Management, Nursing and Sustainability. Stockton also offers 17 master's degree programs and three doctoral programs in Physical Therapy, Nursing Practice and Organizational Leadership.

Stockton is ranked among the Top 100 Public National Universities, according to the 2024 U.S. News & World Report College Rankings. Military Times ranks Stockton among its "Best for Vets" colleges. Stockton also is very transfer friendly and partners with area community colleges to offer a seamless transition to a bachelor's degree.

As enrollment has grown, so has the University. A new academic quad has transformed the Galloway campus, anchored by the Campus Center, Unified Science Center I & II, and the John F. Scarpa Health Sciences Center. Stockton also expanded its presence throughout South Jersey, with instructional sites in Manahawkin, Woodbine and Hammonton.

Stockton Atlantic City, which opened in the fall of 2018, spurred the development of a University District, bringing new excitement and economic diversity to the resort community. A second residential building opened in the fall of 2023, bringing the number of students living in the city to more than 900. Students actively live and learn in Atlantic City, engaging with businesses and the community through internships and community service projects.

Why do students choose Stockton? Learn more at stockton.edu.

MESSAGE FROM THE FACULTY DIRECTOR



As a faculty member on the Hughes Center Advisory Board since 2013, I have had the pleasure of watching the Center grow over the last decade. We remain committed to the key mission of the Center to promote civic engagement and inform the public, policymakers, and other stakeholders about policy issues that impact New Jerseyans in our region and across the state. Our Center's approach is grounded in collaboration, working together with campus partners, our students, our community, our government, and leaders and organizations in the public and private sectors in the state and beyond, to deliver on our mission. We emphasize working together to understand key issues, learn from each other, and move towards solving our collective problems with ingenuity and creativity, alongside a strong work ethic, professionalism, and a commitment to the public good.

Whether through our public events, the Stockton Polling Institute, our research and polling services, managing the Washington D.C. internship program at the university, and connecting with students on and off campus, serving the public good is at the core of what we do.

As a nonpartisan Center, we encourage spirited dialogue on the most pressing policy issues. All are welcome! A thriving democracy depends on us engaging with each other to deliberate and make decisions about our most pressing problems, our goals for the future, and how we want to live - without doing harm to others. As individuals, how we define our problems, how we prioritize our goals, and what we envision for the future may not be the same. But without spaces for us to talk and listen to each other, people often resort to taking sides, relying on social media for content and news, and they stay out of government and politics – the heart of public service in a democracy like our own.

The Hughes Center for Public Policy provides spaces for our community to come together, and for our students to develop the skills and knowledge they need to lead our communities in the future.

- **Dr. Tina Zappile, Ph.D., Director and Associate Professor of Political Science**

PUBLIC EVENTS



The Hughes Center sponsors in-person and virtual speaker series, forums, and panel discussions that engage New Jersey residents on public policy.

Hughes Center Conversations

This series includes an annual in-person event featuring a prominent guest speaker. The aim is to foster community engagement by providing a forum for the discussion of important issues that impact their lives. Previous speakers include U.S. Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch, Peter Baker, Chief White House Correspondent for *The New York Times*, and Rear Admiral Kevin Sweeny, USN (Ret.), former chief of staff to U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis.

Policy Panels, Forums, and Conferences

These events feature expert commentary on timely policy topics. Throughout the year, the center regularly hosts panel discussions, spotlights on faculty research, and virtual forums that tackle the most pressing issues for New Jerseyans. Our panels often include a mix of public and private sector experts, researchers, advocates, and practitioners speaking about issues like judicial safety - featuring Judge Esther Salas, or New Jersey's energy future - featuring the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities President Christine Guhl-Sadovy, alongside industry and business leaders. Our inaugural conference this year on the power of public higher education in New Jersey brought together university presidents, business leaders, and alumni, and legislators from across the state.

Constitution Day

The Hughes Center for Public Policy hosts this annual campus-wide event that features keynote presentations by legal scholars, journalists, or practitioners focused on constitutional issues, hosting experts like Mary McCord, Rick Hasen, and Bryan Stevenson. In addition to the Constitution Day planning committee led by university faculty and staff, Stockton students serve as Constitution Day fellows, allowing them the chance to engage directly with renowned experts.

STOCKTON POLLING INSTITUTE



The Stockton Polling Institute conducts independent nonpartisan public opinion polling on issues of importance across New Jersey and the region. The Hughes Center for Public Policy established the Stockton Polling Institute in 2012 in part to give voice to the citizens of southern New Jersey. Managed by Alyssa Maurice, our Assistant Director and Head of Research & Polling, our public opinion research follows American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)'s transparency standards and uses new technologies to ensure reliable and valid results.

The Stockton Polling Institute conducts polls as a public service, and to assist our faculty and administration in research. The Hughes Center recognizes that understanding the will of the people is critical to the policymaking process. With a focus on salient and timely policy issues, the Polling Institute ensures that New Jerseyans have a seat at the table. The Hughes Center supplements its public opinion research with educational programming to provide residents with crucial context to develop informed positions.

Research Services

The Hughes Center for Public Policy offers research services for private clients, including government agencies. We offer advanced solutions to help organizations understand what people think and why, turning data into direction. With deep industry experience, we employ tailored approaches that address clients' unique needs and goals.

Our Services

- Research design or consultation
- Questionnaire development
- Survey programming
- Multi-mode data collection
- Statistical weighting
- Data analysis and customized reports

Our clients

- Academic institutions
- Government agencies
- Non-profit organizations
- Professional associations

Alyssa Maurice,
Assistant Director and Head of Research & Polling

RESEARCH



The Hughes Center for Public Policy conducts relevant and timely research on important policy issues by supporting our expert faculty at Stockton University.

Public Policy Research Fellows

Each year the Hughes Center sponsors Faculty Fellows who conduct research on behalf of and in collaboration with the Center. Stockton faculty explore timely issues relevant to their field of expertise to inform and educate both the public and policymakers alike. The research areas recently examined by Hughes Center Fellows include innovative therapies for mental health treatment, civic education in K-12 schools, public opinion and immigration, and maternal health outcomes. The Hughes Center aims to enhance the impact and reach of this work by organizing supplemental programming to highlight their findings, including panel events, digital content, data dashboards, research showcases, and more.

Public Policy Research Funding

The Center offers a competitive funding opportunity to support faculty research projects.

The South Jersey Economic Review (SJER)

These reports are published bi-annually by the Hughes Center for Public Policy. Written by Associate Professor Oliver Cooke, Ph.D., the SJER provides in-depth analyses of the regional economy's health care, construction, retail trade, and gaming industries. It also explores key trends in the region's labor force, demographics and wages.

Student Research Support

The Hughes Center also supports and serves as a resource for student researchers at Stockton, providing consultation on research design, including methodology, questionnaire development and guidance on industry standards, assisting with data collection, providing data files for them to engage in their own analysis as part of their academic coursework, financial support for projects, guest lectures on practical research applications, and more.

WASHINGTON INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



Stockton University, in partnership with The Washington Center (TWC), offers a one-of-a-kind Washington Internship Program (WIP) that allows students to spend a full semester living and working in Washington, D.C at the heart of national and global decision-making. Students of all majors can earn academic credit, gain real-world experience, and build a professional network that will last a lifetime. In addition to interning with top-tier organizations in government, nonprofits, media, law and business, students participate in career readiness programming, including workshops, networking events, and speaker series with thought leaders.

The Hughes Public Policy Center is proud to run this program, engaging in student recruitment, administrative support, academic and career advising for interested students, and providing financial support to Stockton interns while in D.C.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



Internship Support and Professional Development

The center helps connect students to local legislative, government affairs, and policy internships. In addition, we provide workforce development like resume review, interview preparation, and mentorship.

Student Competitions and Events

The center provides opportunities for students to participate in national competitions like the NATO Disinformation Challenge hosted by the William and Mary College and NATO Headquarters and to receive invaluable coaching from industry experts.

Pizza and Politics Series

The center hosts regular watch parties for webinars by the Council on Foreign Relations that address timely geopolitical issues. This series also includes “Lunch with a Legislator”, monthly sessions hosted in partnership with Stockton’s Office of Government Relations. Legislators at the state and national level come to campus to talk to students about their role and how they got there. The students get to engage directly with renowned experts and policymakers through this series.

Financial Support for Student Opportunities

The center funds student attendance to the annual NEW Leadership Program at Rutgers University, a national, nonpartisan public leadership training program for college students, addressing women’s underrepresentation in politics.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION



Election Debates and Candidate Forums

The Hughes Center for Public Policy sponsors election debates for candidates for federal, state, and local offices. Election debates and public forums are vital to a healthy democracy. They help connect voters to candidates, boost political awareness and civic engagement, and help anchor the public discourse in substantive policy exchange. Debates are held at the main Galloway campus and in Atlantic City. We adhere to the guidelines of the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and, when applicable, New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC) rules for live debates and candidate forums, ensuring equal treatment of all candidates and parties.

American Democracy Project (ADP)

The American Democracy Project is an initiative of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). At Stockton, the Hughes Center for Public Policy plans and promotes ADP programming focused on fostering civic education and engagement. Throughout the academic year, ADP develops programs on a range of different timely political and policy issues that are designed to increase political awareness and engagement for our campus community.

“Ospreys Talk” Dialogue Series

In 2026, the Center will reestablish campus workshops and training in deliberative dialogue for students, faculty, and staff through a new series called “Ospreys Talk”. The Center is proud to facilitate the participation of the university in a one-year program offered by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and Constructive Dialogue Institute (CDI).

THE AMBASSADOR WILLIAM J. HUGHES COLLECTION



The late Ambassador Hughes donated his personal archive, which chronicles his years of public service in the House of Representatives and as the U.S. Ambassador to Panama. The archive includes correspondence, photos, diaries, Congressional Record citations, press releases, newsletters and press clippings, all of which is available in the Stockton Library for use by researchers.

Bill signing letters and pens from Presidents Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, photos of Amb. Hughes with various presidents, resolutions, plaques, photos and other items documenting his distinguished years of public service all are on display at the Hughes Center on the Galloway campus (L-Wing, 2nd floor).

AMBASSADOR WILLIAM J. HUGHES (1932-2019)

A native of southern New Jersey, Ambassador William H. Hughes was dedicated to the prosperity and freedom of the American people. He and his wife Nancy were married for 61 years and raised their four children in Ocean City, N.J.

Prior to his election to Congress in 1974, he was president of the law firm of Loveland, Hughes and Garrett in Ocean City. He then served for 10 years as First Assistant Prosecutor in Cape May County and established a record of never being reversed on appeal.

Throughout his career, Bill Hughes sponsored projects and initiatives to create jobs, protect the environment and improve the quality of life in southern New Jersey. Serving in the U.S. House of Representatives for two decades and under five presidents, he was a prominent leader as Chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, House Aging Subcommittee on Retirement Income and Employment, and later the Judiciary Subcommittee on Intellectual Property and Judicial Administration.

As Congressman, Bill Hughes sponsored legislation to prohibit ocean dumping, protect our beaches, and enhance the region's tourism industry. He co-authored the historic legislation that established New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve and spearheaded the efforts that led to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers designation of the Manumuskinnick and Menantico rivers.

Bill co-founded the South Jersey Economic Development District and won approval for a program that established the nation's premiere aviation test and evaluation facility in South Jersey, which was later renamed the William J. Hughes Federal Aviation Technical Center. He helped develop a new port in Salem that was designated a U.S. port of entry and helped establish the first Foreign Trade Zone in South Jersey.

During his tenure as Chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Congress passed more than 40 major anticrime laws dealing with drug trafficking, child pornography, money laundering, computer crime and the banning of cop-killer bullets.

Bill was appointed U.S. Ambassador to Panama by former President Bill Clinton in 1995. One of his proudest accomplishments was participating in the return of the Panama Canal to Panamanian control.

2025 HUGHES CENTER HONOREES

The Hughes Center Honors recognizes outstanding New Jerseyans for excellence in their field and for a commitment to public service, civility, and bipartisanship that reflects the life and career of Ambassador William J. Hughes. Past Lifetime Achievement Award recipients include John Scarpa, the late former New Jersey Governors Brendan Byrne and Jim Florio, former Governors Thomas Kean and Christine Todd Whitman, and the late Ambassador Hughes, who was presented his award in 2017 by then-former Vice President Joe Biden.

Civility in Politics and Government Award Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award

These awards recognize distinguished individuals whose careers reflect extraordinary public service, visionary leadership, and a legacy of integrity in civic life.



Dr. Edward H. Salmon

Former Chairman, Salmon Ventures Ltd.

Former President, New Jersey Board of Public Utilities

Former Member, New Jersey General Assembly

27 years in Education

Dr. Salmon was a Hall of Fame Educator, Coach, and K-12 Administrator. Dr. Salmon and his wife Marilyn together were educators in the Millville Public Schools for 52 years and taught over 7,000 students who are now 44 to 78 years old.

26 years in Government

Dr. Salmon received numerous awards and honors as the Mayor of Millville, Cumberland County Freeholder Director, New Jersey State Assemblyman, President of the N.J. Board of Public Utilities, and a member of Governor Florio's Cabinet.

27 years in Business and Industry

Dr. Salmon was the founder and president of four successful companies working throughout New Jersey and America: AUS Pathways; Salmon Ventures Ltd.; New Jersey Energy Coalition; and Living Legacy.

2025 HUGHES CENTER HONOREES

32 years of leadership in the oldest trade organization in Washington, DC - NARUC

Dr. Salmon was an elected leader and convention speaker for the National Association of Regulatory Commissioners (NARUC) from 1991 to 2023. Dr. Salmon and his wife Marilyn attended over 200 conferences held in all the major cities in the United States of America.

Dr. Salmon's decades of work in government, energy policy, and civic engagement exemplify both the spirit and substance of both awards. Dr. Salmon was the driving force behind the creation of the Hughes Center. His selfless dedication to public service, his advocacy for the energy and utility resources of the state of New Jersey, and his contribution to education deserve this recognition. Dr. Salmon has been a 'giver' his entire life to his family, his community, and New Jersey at large. From his early service in the New Jersey General Assembly - where he earned respect across the aisle for your practical leadership and statesmanship - to his appointment as President of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, he has consistently placed the public interest above partisanship. His focus on long-term solutions, particularly in energy infrastructure, economic development, and regulatory reform, has left an enduring impact on the state and its future. As Chairman of Salmon Ventures Ltd., Dr. Salmon continued to guide municipalities and public agencies with wisdom and clarity, earning a reputation as a trusted voice in public policy. Equally important has been his unwavering commitment to civil discourse. In a time when public trust in institutions and leaders is often tested, Dr. Salmon has modeled humility, collegiality, and respect for democratic values - hallmarks of the civility Congressman William J. Hughes stood for. His career is a testament to what leadership in public life should be: honest, principled, and committed to making government work for all. We are honored to celebrate his lifetime of contributions and his continuing influence in New Jersey's civic and political landscape.

2025 HUGHES CENTER HONOREES

Excellence in Civic Engagement Award

This award recognizes individuals whose dedication to civic life has made a profound and enduring impact on the strength of communities and the vitality of democratic institutions.



Christina M. Renna

**President & CEO,
Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey**

Christina's prior work in New Jersey state government, and now President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey exemplifies this standard of leadership and engagement. Through her tireless advocacy, strategic insight, and collaborative spirit, she has elevated the role of the Chamber as a powerful convener and catalyst for economic development, public-private partnership, and regional progress. Her leadership has been particularly notable for building connections between the business sector, elected officials, and civic stakeholders, ensuring that diverse voices are included in shaping policy and opportunity across South Jersey. Under her guidance, the Chamber has become a vital platform for civic dialogue and regional problem-solving. From championing small business recovery efforts to amplifying the needs of underrepresented communities, Christina has demonstrated how civic engagement can lead to concrete change—and how leadership rooted in service and accessibility can help communities thrive.

2025 HUGHES CENTER HONOREES

Community Leadership Award

This award recognizes individuals who exemplify civic-minded leadership and who have made lasting contributions to the public good through vision, service, and action.



Cassie Iacovelli

Former Executive Director, MainStreet Hammonton

Cassie Iacovelli served as the Executive Director of MainStreet Hammonton for 15 years and retired in July 2023. During her tenure, community bonds were strengthened, significant economic vitality expanded in Downtown Hammonton and Hammonton became a destination for arts, events, shopping, dining and craft beverages; leading Hammonton to be honored as one of the "Great Places in New Jersey" by the American Planning Association. Cassie also served on the Hammonton Arts Advisory Committee, Hammonton Health Coalition, Hammonton Covid Relief Economic Impact Committee and Hammonton Pedestrian & Bike Steering Committee. In 2022, she was proudly honored as an "Inclusion Pathfinder" by Allies in Caring, a local non-profit, for her contribution to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Hammonton was one of six South Jersey towns selected to receive a \$100,000 grant from the Community Foundation of South Jersey (CFSJ); aimed to strengthen relationships and encourage a sense of solidarity in South Jersey communities. For five years, Cassie served as the Program Coordinator initiating the Community Heart and Soul model. This community-wide and resident driven engagement and planning process generated the data needed to develop Community Value Statements that reflected what matters most to the Hammonton community and the development of a Community Plan of Action to enhance Hammonton now and in the future. The final phase of this project was the creation of a Hammonton Community Endowment, made possible through a challenge grant in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Cassie now serves on the Hammonton Community Endowment Advisory Board tasked with building on the momentum of Hammonton Heart and Soul's process and fostering endowment building to provide community grants to ensure Hammonton remains a strong, healthy and vibrant community.

2025 HUGHES CENTER HONOREES

Prior to her position in Hammonton, Cassie was employed at Rider University from 1980-2008. Her final position was Assistant Dean of Campus Life. Upon her retirement from Rider University, a Cassie D Iacovelli Endowed Scholarship was established and is now awarded annually to a sophomore or junior student leader who is in good academic standing. The Cassie D Iacovelli Student Government Award is given each year to a full-time undergraduate student in good academic standing who serves in student government. Cassie holds a Master of Education in Student Personnel Services from The College of New Jersey and Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Seton Hall University. Cassie has lived in Hammonton with her husband John since 2008. They are the proud parents of a son John, his wife Bertha, their daughter Joanna and daughter Nicole and her husband Jack Meyers. John and Cassie cherish being grandparents to four grandsons, Isaac, Jake, Ethan and Pete and a granddaughter, Catherine.

The charm, tranquility and closeness to the shore are why they love living in Hammonton.

2025 HUGHES CENTER HONOREES

Distinctive Alumni Leadership Award

This award recognizes Stockton University alumni who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and impact in public service, civic life, and professional excellence.



The Honorable Jessica Ramirez '98

Attorney, D'Arcy Johnson Day

Assemblywoman, New Jersey Legislative District 32

As both an accomplished attorney and a dedicated public servant in the New Jersey General Assembly, Assemblywoman Ramirez exemplifies the highest ideals of Stockton's mission and the enduring legacy of public engagement championed by the late Congressman William J. Hughes. Since graduating from Stockton in 1998, Assemblywoman Ramirez's career has reflected a steadfast commitment to justice, equity, and advocacy for the people of New Jersey. Whether serving as an attorney at D'Arcy Johnson Day - where she has represented clients with integrity and compassion - or in her current role as Assemblywoman for District 32, her leadership has consistently amplified community voices and advanced policy solutions that improve lives. The Assemblywoman's legislative work has addressed critical issues ranging from economic development and workers' rights to public safety and education. She is known by colleagues and constituents alike for her principled approach, collaborative spirit, and devotion to service - a reflection of both her personal values and her Stockton education. Asw. Ramirez is a passionate advocate for children and victims of sexual assault, seeking justice and holding offenders accountable. Asw. Ramirez has served on the New Jersey Ethics Committee and served as an Eminent Domain Commissioner for the State of N.J., presiding over cases dealing with condemnation and eminent domain. Her work as a contract attorney for the Public Defender's Office of New Jersey allowed her to represent indigent clients and juveniles. She is (also) a mentor and role model for students. We are proud to count her among our alumni and thrilled to recognize her achievements with this award. Her example inspires current and future generations of Stockton students to lead with courage, integrity, and purpose.

2025 HUGHES CENTER HONOREES

Distinctive Student Leadership Award

This award recognizes a current Stockton student who has demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities, civic engagement, and dedication to ethical governance.



Vlad Vasylyk

**Junior majoring in Political Science with a
Concentration International Affairs and Minor in
Global Studies**

As a current student at Stockton University, Vlad demonstrates a strong commitment to democratic values, promoting civic and political engagement. In addition to excellence in academics, Vlad has a strong record of leadership on campus. He has served in Student Senate since his freshman year, and his sophomore year he was Vice President of the Student Senate. Vlad is a student

Assistant at the Office of Student Development, and an active member of many campus organizations. He is deeply committed to campus service and the interdisciplinary liberal-arts education at Stockton University.

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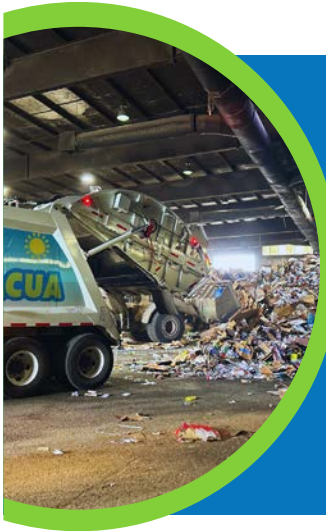
Dr. Mukesh N. Roy

Tennessee Avenue Atlantic City (TennAveAC)



PROUD TO SUPPORT
The William J. Hughes Center
for Public Policy

*Congratulations to
Christina Renna and all
of this year's honorees!*



- Wastewater Treatment
- Solid Waste Management
- Recycling
- Environmental Tours
- Community Outreach and Education
- Shared Services

Atlantic County Utilities Authority  www.acua.com  609.272.6950

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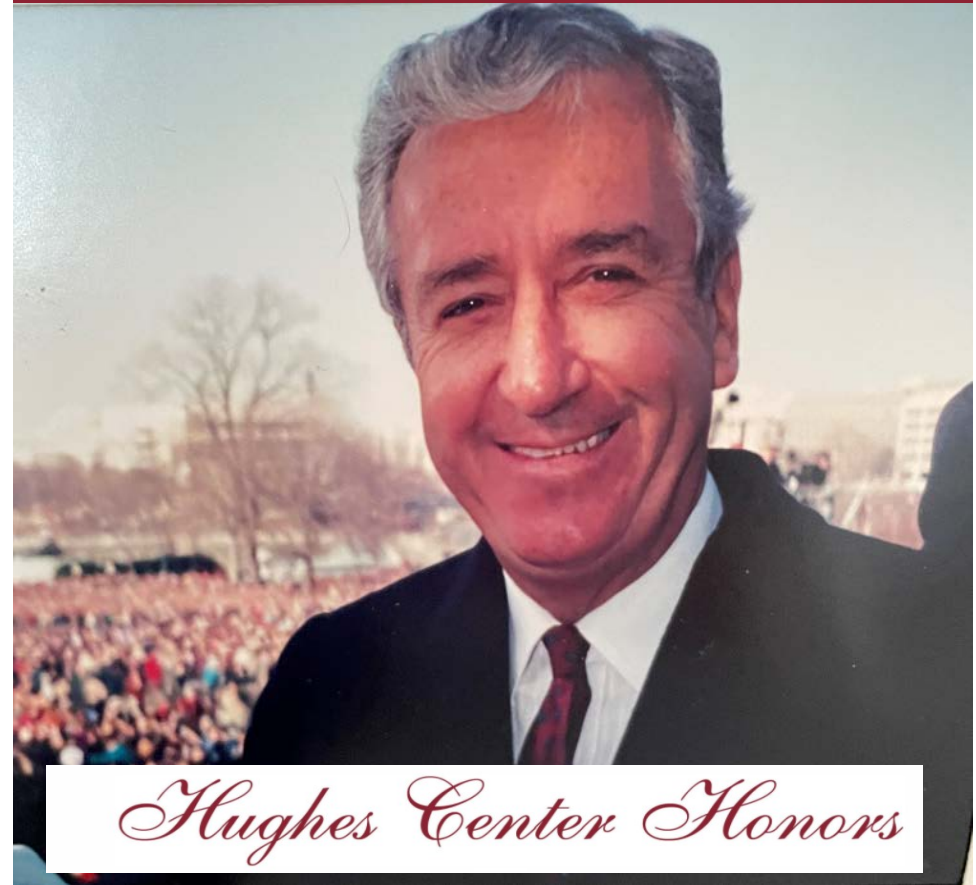
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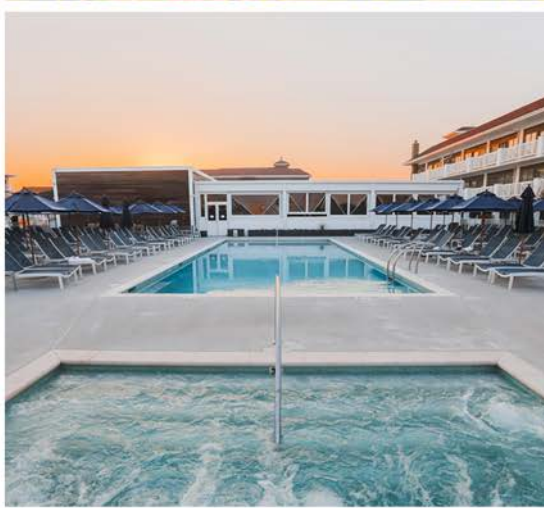
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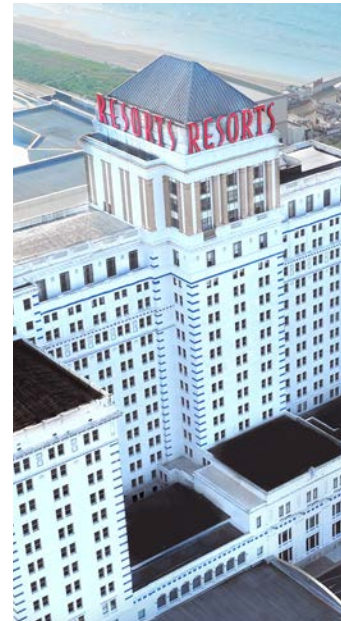


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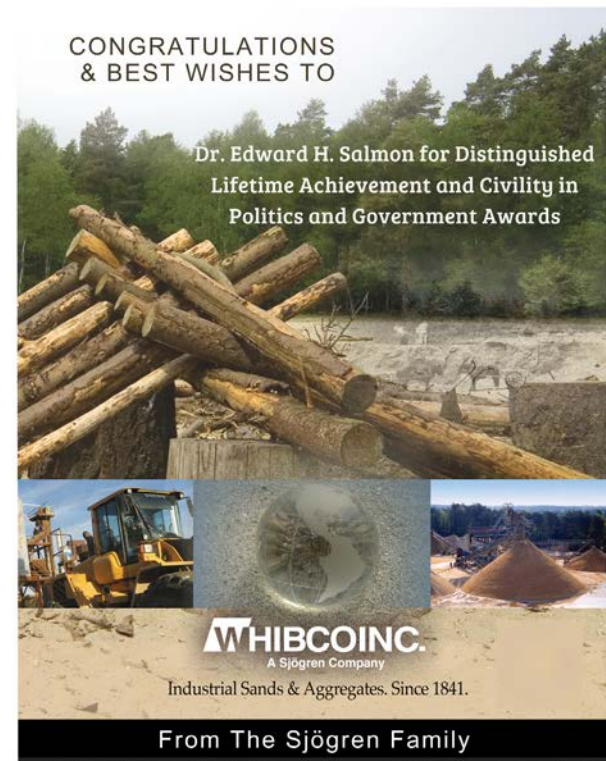


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