

DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

James W. King

At 6 feet 4 inches, Jim King never had to learn how to walk tall, but he did have to learn how to speak again following a devastating stroke in 1992. It was then that Jim came to know Riverside Community College as well as he knew his family—spending long hours relearning the basic skills of reading and speech.

But the determination that Jim showed at RCC, and his support for the College, is nothing new. Throughout his life, Jim has dealt with challenges and opportunities with determination and passion.

Jim was born in Houston, TX, and his family moved to Los Angeles when he was five years old. As an elementary school student, he was active in the Leader's Club – a safety organization on campus. That experience ignited a lifelong commitment to volunteer work.

As a junior at Morningside High School, Jim, who was only the 62nd black student admitted to the school, started a Human Relations Committee. The organization promoted cultural acceptance, matching new students with students of other races, and seeking to establish a common bond among classmates. Jim graduated from Morningside at age 17 and went to work for The Gas Company while attending college.

Jim would continue his career with The Gas Company for more than 36 years, until he retired as Regional Government Affairs Manager in 2005. He says that “it was a great job because it’s part of my nature to become involved with different kinds of groups. God gives us a lot of blessings. You have to pass some of those along to help other people.”

His penchant for “paying it forward” encompassed a five-year term as president of the Black Culture Foundation, and serving as a board member of the Inland Empire Education Foundation, the Norco Economic Development Council, the World Affairs Council, the National Urban League, United Way of the Inland Valleys, the Urban League of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, the Moreno Valley Black Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce. During his long career, Jim also has served as chair for many organizations’ boards, including the Riverside County Workforce Development Board, the Community and Economic Commission, the March of Dimes, and The Valley Group (2005).

In 1990, Jim was named Humanitarian of the Year by the Black Culture Foundation and July 11th was proclaimed as Jim King Day in Rialto. In 1998, Jim received the Martin Luther King Jr. Visionaries Award, and recently he was awarded The Valley Group Exceptional Service Award. Two months ago, the city of Perris declared March 12, 2005, as Jim King Day, and on May 10, 2005, Congressman Ken Calvert read Jim King’s biography into the Congressional Record.

Jim’s ties to Riverside Community College are long and strong. He has gone from student (he attended classes here to regain his speech and writing skills following the stroke) to a friend and supporter (the Passport to College initiative) to president of the RCC Foundation Board (2005).

“Everyone needs to continue his or her education as it will make life fantastic,” he says of his continued involvement with the College. “I didn’t become involved because I wanted to receive awards. It just gives me joy to give back to others. It’s part of my life.”

