

**For Immediate Release:**

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## PRESS RELEASE

### 21st Annual Ceremony to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 15<sup>th</sup> at the Ridgefield Playhouse

On Monday, January 15, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. The town of Ridgefield invites everyone to celebrate the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with music and song as well as honoring Lori Berisford, who, among other things, has been the President of the Board of Directors of SPHERE (an organization whose mission it is to enrich and enhance the lives of adults with disabilities through education, recreation and the arts) since 2014. This ceremony, which will have performances by The Ridgefield Chorale, Broadway performers Daniel C Levine, Katie Diamond and Bryan Perri, actress Kimberly Wilson and Acclaimed Jazz Rock Fusion Band Project Grand Slam, among others, is open to the public at no charge. In addition to musical performances, the event will include readings and remarks by selected speakers.

The Spirit of Dr. King Community Service Award is presented to a member of the town who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to community service and selflessness in the finest traditions of Dr. Martin Luther King. This annual tradition honors the memory of Dr. King and celebrates how that memory lives on in the good works of Ridgefielders today. This year's ceremony honors Lori Berisford, who, in addition to currently serving as President and Board Chair of SPHERE, is also a board member at Founders Hall and The Women's Center, where she also serves as Chair of the Nominating Committee. Berisford rolls up her sleeves to support Ability Beyond, The Ridgefield Playhouse, Ridgefield Visiting Nurse Association, and Sunrise Cottage, among others.

This is the fourth year that the event has been held at The Ridgefield Playhouse and grown to the size and scale that it has with multiple performers and drawing crowds upwards of 200 attendees. “The town looks forward to the celebration of the King Holiday. The King Holiday serves as a focal point for establishing and maintaining community service involving millions of Americans throughout the year to address critical social problems of this nation and to help improve the quality of life for humankind,” said Mark Robinson, ceremony organizer and former member of the state’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission.

Begun in 1997 as one of several community activities and initiatives organized and sponsored by ROUND (Ridgefielders Organized for Understanding and Diversity), the MLK celebration has become an enduring and highly regarded new tradition in Ridgefield. The purpose is to ensure that the spirit with which Dr. King lived and the struggles for which he died are remembered and live on in the hearts and minds of our community. When Rudy Marconi took office as First Selectman in 1999, he became Ridgefield’s first elected official to formally participate and has joined Mark Robinson as a co-organizer of the event ever since.

The Ridgefield Playhouse is a not-for-profit performing arts center located at 80 East Ridge, parallel to Main St., Ridgefield, CT; 203-438-5795; [ridgefieldplayhouse.org](http://ridgefieldplayhouse.org).



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