

## Fund highlights

### THE HONORABLE DR. CLIFFORD E. DEBAPTISTE FAMILY OF FUNDS

“Uplifting life through service” is the theme for the life led by Dr. DeBaptiste. It is also the slogan for his business. Due to his grace, Chester County residents have been uplifted for decades and decades.

The young Clifford first visited West Chester in the 1940’s when he visited his Aunt Louise. Through his frequent visits, he began a lifetime love affair with the town, vowing to return and open up his own business. Young, energetic and ambitious, he returned in 1954 after having served in the U.S. Army, graduating from mortuary school, and marrying Inez Manning. He and Inez opened the DeBaptiste Funeral Home that year. The business prospered, and they opened a new facility during the Great Blizzard of January 1965 at 601 E. Miner Street in West Chester, where it remains to this day.

In 1973, daughter Lillian DeBaptiste joined the family business. Inez and Lillian were the first mother-daughter team to simultaneously become funeral directors in Pennsylvania. They had a great run together for nearly two decades, until the beloved Inez passed away in 1990.

The DeBaptiste family lives and works in the heart of the West Chester community, serving their neighbors at the most sensitive of times. As funeral directors, their service creates an atmosphere authentic to each life, evoking the fondest of memories and bringing comfort and joy to hurting hearts.

Dr. DeBaptiste found that many people want to create a legacy on behalf of their departed family members. Dr. DeBaptiste personally establishes scholarship funds and also introduces families and friends to the Community Foundation. Education and scholarship funds are his hallmark. To celebrate his tenure as Mayor of West Chester, the Mayor Clifford E. DeBaptiste Scholarship was created to annually provide tuition support to a West Chester University freshman majoring in social work. The Dr. W.T.M. Johnson Memorial Scholarship awards annual scholarships to Henderson High School students. The Dr. Robert H. and Doris E. Hanna Scholarship is given to students graduating from a Chester County high school. The Alice M. Thomas Scholarship Fund pays homage to the work of this extraordinary Henderson High School guidance counselor. And Stanley’s Dream Scholarship was initiated by Dr. DeBaptiste to honor a promising youth’s life that was too short-lived. These endowed scholarships make a difference forever and help Chester County students pursue their dreams, well-equipped with a college education.

Dr. DeBaptiste holds lifetime memberships in four branches of the NAACP. He has received four gubernatorial appointments, including as a member and Vice President of the Board of Trustees of West Chester University. Since 1975, he has also served on the Board of Directors of First National Bank of Chester County.

Yet his service goes far beyond Chester County. In 2009 alone, Dr. DeBaptiste was recognized by the National Purple Heart Association for his service in the U.S. Army during the 1940s and the Korean War; by the NAACP for his years as a business leader; and honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Sunrise Rotary Club of West Chester. He also received his 33rd degree and final degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, a distinction shared by President Bill Clinton and Colin Powell. Overall, Dr. DeBaptiste has been recognized with over 400 awards and citations throughout the years.

Dr. DeBaptiste has served on the State Board of Funeral Directors for the Commonwealth, and he was elected Chair of the Board 13 times. He is also one of the few people to be President of the Pennsylvania Funeral Directors Association and simultaneously Chair of the State Board of Funeral Directors. He is the first Association President from Chester County. He holds memberships in all local, county, state and national funeral director associations, traveling frequently to fulfill his obligations. In 2009, Dr. DeBaptiste celebrated marked his professional service by creating three donor advised funds on behalf of his professional associations. “It is important to demonstrate to funeral directors that there are tangible ways they can become involved in strengthening their communities. These three perpetual funds will allow the funeral director associations to make charitable grants to causes that are important to them and their communities.”

Dr. DeBaptiste is a model of community legacy philanthropy. He consistently helps others to find ways to commemorate those they hold dear, and makes a positive difference in numerous lives for perpetuity. Uplifting life through service...creating a strong community...forever.



*Pictured: Clifford DeBaptiste with his daughter Lillian DeBaptiste, who serves on the selection committee for some of the DeBaptiste scholarship funds.*