

Ricky Johnson-Nominee for Nicholas G. Carter Volunteer Recognition Award

It is a great honor and privilege to nominate Ricky Johnson for the Nicholas G. Carter Volunteer Recognition Award for Local Service.

"Ambassador" Ricky Johnson as he is fondly called by fellow stampers because of his outreach to encourage membership in and to work on behalf of the Ebony Society of Philatelic Events and Reflections (ESPER), has been a member of the Organization since 1998. Since then, he has become one of ESPER's most ardent supporters and membership recruiters. Ricky is greatly responsible for the successful establishment of ESPER state chapters in Georgia and South Carolina utilizing his leadership and mentoring skills. Serving, growing, and advocating for ESPER is always at the forefront of his mind. Ricky willingly shares his stamp collection with new members, students, and those organizing exhibits. He regularly attends local, state, and national shows such as APS Ameristamp /SESE, GASS, BALPEX, CHARPEX, Columbia Philatelic Stamp Show and many others, spreading goodwill and promoting ESPER wherever he travels.

Tony Thaxton, Georgia ESPER Chapter Director, expresses his appreciation for Ricky's leadership spirit. "What makes Ricky special is that he will do everything and anything to help fellow philatelists. When the Georgia Chapter needed cachets to complete the Black Heritage Series Exhibit for the SESE, Ricky made sure we got the cachets needed. When I was asked to take the position of Georgia Chapter Director, Ricky coached me on my responsibilities. He even drove from North Carolina to attend our chapter meetings.

And Ricky did not stop there. My wife and I held a Black History program at our local library that combined history and stamp collecting. Not only did Ricky provide stamps for the children, he also attended the program. When Ricky attended programs that I could not attend he made sure I got stamps or paraphernalia from the program. It is said that "Ricky has more stamps than the local post office." He is the one person that everyone asks about when I attend a regional or national stamp program/event.

My tenure as Georgia ESPER Chapter Director would not have been as successful without the help and support that I received from Ricky Johnson."

Oneal Tyler, South Carolina ESPER Chapter Director and wife Cassandra also give reflections. "Ricky Johnson is our personal ESPER stamp ambassador and cheerleader. He teaches and guides all on how to collect, view details about the stamp, as well as the stamps artist or designer. Neal met him at a cultural event and while there Ricky took him under his wings and started sharing and teaching him about different Black stamps. All this was unknown information to us. Ricky has travelled all over the United States attending various stamp shows on his own and by himself supporting various stamp organizations and events to represent ESPER. While attending at these shows he recruits ESPER membership. He always communicates by sending a letter covered with various stamps about the show he attended, and cites any upcoming unveilings or stamp events.

Ricky was instrumental in helping to establish the South Carolina ESPER chapter. He persuaded Oneal Tyler to become the chapter president and Cassandra Tyler to work on the board. He has attended almost every Columbia Philatelic stamp show at Spring Valley High School here in Columbia, SC. Also, he always brought other members from North Carolina's Esper Chapter with him. Ricky assisted with the plans and meeting for the unveiling of the Kwanza stamp held in Charleston, SC. He helped the SC Chapter with an ESPER stamp presentation at St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church and another church in the Waverly Historic area of Columbia, SC. Ricky traveled with us to the World Stamp show in New York and held our hands showing us how to navigate the huge venue. These are just a few of the educational and supportive examples of how hard Ricky has worked making sure everyone knows the value of stamp collecting. Many express how Ricky stimulated their interest in collecting stamps. Conversations with Ricky Johnson are always enlightening and rewarding. He is an

unselfish, encouraging stamp collector with a willingness to instruct, share, guide, and teach everyone about the joys of stamp collecting."

Ricky is a very humble person and works quietly in the background. Yet his work and accomplishments speak loudly at all levels of ESPER. His greatest rewards, says Ricky are (1) the many wonderful people he has met since joining ESPER- including fellow stamp collectors; colleagues from other stamp organizations-APS, ATA, AFDCS; and Stamp Dealers; and (2) having an opportunity do whatever he can to promote the vision and mission of the local and national ESPER organizations and to elevate ESPER's image across the nation and internationally.