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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Frank Billingsley Tapped for 2021 Donald A. Cheney Award

Annual honor recognizes dedication to preserving Central Florida's history

ORLANDO, Fla. (Nov. 8, 2021) – The History Center and the Historical Society of Central Florida are proud to announce that Frank Billingsley is the 2021 recipient of the annual Donald A. Cheney Award, presented each year to a Central Floridian who embodies dedication to preserving the area's history.

The History Center's executive director, Pamela Schwartz, surprised Billingsley with the award at a November 8 event that celebrated his retirement after more than 30 years with the City of Orlando.

Presenting the award, Schwartz praised Billingsley's expertise about Orlando-area history and his enduring support for it. "Whether knowing some historical fact about everything that comes up in conversation, or connecting us to donors, or showing up on my museum's doorstep with a box of items he 'thought might be worth saving,' Frank has both made history for this community and championed its preservation," she noted."

Born in 1958 in Lynchburg, Va., Billingsley earned a degree in community development at Georgia State University and moved to Orlando in 1989 to join the Greater Orlando Chamber of Commerce as community and business information manager; he became manager of business development for Orlando's Downtown Development Board in the 1990s. Diving into research, Billingsley developed great expertise about Orlando, including its history. "He's the most knowledgeable person I know about general and specific things in our community," former GOCC president Jacob Stuart has said about Billingsley, whose service with the city over the years included leadership positions with the Community Redevelopment Agency, the Permitting Department, and as chief of staff for Mayor Buddy Dyer. Before his retirement, he served as the city's first director of Placemaking and Competitiveness.

First presented in 1992, the Donald A. Cheney Award honors community champions who embody dedication to Central Florida's heritage and to civic engagement. The award carries on the legacy of its namesake, Judge Donald A. Cheney (1889-1983), a founder of Historical Society and all that led to today's nationally award-winning History Center.

The Orange County Regional History Center, housed in a historic courthouse at 65 E. Central Blvd. in downtown Orlando, features four floors of permanent and special exhibitions. The museum is a Smithsonian Institution affiliate and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. It is funded in part by Orange County Government through the Community & Family Services Department under Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings and the Board of County Commissioners. The Historical Society of Central Florida Inc. is supported by United Arts of Central Florida and sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture, and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture. For more information, visit www.thehistorycenter.org



Pictured (left to right): Donna Dowless, Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, Frank Billingsley, Pam Schwartz, Roseanne Harrington (Orange County Government)